Heartland Genealogy Blog Posts May-June 2026

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Table of Contents

Friday Find
A Day in the Life of Mary Crawford
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Monday's Diggings
Bringing Sarah's Story to Life with AI
A Time in the Life of Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond
From Managing Windows PCs to Choosing My Own Mac
Friday Find
ABC Biography Project
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Monday's Diggings
Questionable Children
Comparing Infographics
Military Discharge Paper at Courthouse
Friday Find
ABC Biography – Hiram M. Currey
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Fifty-Two Years of Shared Paths
Religious Heritage
AI Mentors
Data Centers
Friday Find
Which Version Do You Prefer
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Monday's Diggings
Bringing Hiram Currey's Story to Life
From GeoCities to WordPress
A Trip Down Memory Lane
Friday Find
Angelina Jane Burke Currey
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Monday's Diggings
Angelina's Song
Getting Better Historical Infographics from Google Notebook LM
When Google Notebook LM Gets the Visuals Wrong
Friday Find
Bringing Angelina Jane Burke Currey's Story to Life with Google Notebook LM and Canva
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Monday Diggings
Sharing a Genealogy Treasure
When a Will Became a Court Battle — The Probate of Aaron Hutchinson
An Unexpected Hutchinson Family Discovery
Friday Find
ABC Biography: Albert Hutchinson
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Monday's Diggings
Albert Hutchinson's Song
When AI Makes Assumptions
Thinking AI and Genealogy
Friday Find
The Paper Trail of Albert Hutchinson's Civil War Service
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Monday's Diggings
Why Did Albert Hutchinson Desert?
Using AI in Genealogy
Color Me Confused!
Friday Find
Julia Harding Hutchinson
Saturday Night Genealogy Fun
Monday's Diggings
Julia Harding Hutchinson – From Biography to Ballad

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 1, 2026
Crawford,Preble County
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/01/friday-find-114/

Guardianship Records in Preble County, Ohio

Do you have documents in your files that likely connect to your research—but you're not quite sure how?

That's exactly the situation I found myself in with a set of photocopied pages from *Preble County, Ohio Common Pleas Court Records*, compiled by Audrey Gilbert. For years, they sat quietly in my files. Then a recent **FamilySearch Full-Text Search** brought them back to life.

A Closer Look at the Records

The original notes from my photocopy read:

> **June 26, 1823**
> Hetty McGuire, age 15, minor heir of Edward McGuire, chose James Crawford as her guardian. Bond: David Shankland.
> Mahala McGuire, age 13, also chose James Crawford. (p. 287)

That was intriguing—but the full-text search uncovered the original court entries.

From the **Guardian Docket (p. 108):**

> James Crawford, Guardian
> Bond $75
> Mahala McGuire, age 13
> David Shankland, Surety
> Letters granted June 27, 1823
>
> James Crawford, Guardian
> Bond $75
> Hettie McGuire, age 15
> David Shankland, Surety
> Letters granted June 27, 1823

Further records reveal:

- **Page 115**:
  Nathan McGuire, age 18, also appointed James Crawford as guardian on June 9, 1824, with David Shankland again serving as surety.
- **September Term, 1829 – Probate Court**:Account current between David Shankland, former guardian, and James Crawford, present guardian of the heirs of Edmund McGuire, deceased, and Joseph McGuire, now deceased.
  Nathan, Hetty, and Mahala McGuire—all heirs at law of Edmund McGuire, deceased.

Expanding the Family

A search of additional Preble County records uncovered a will for **Edward McGuire**, which helps clarify the family:

> "…I also give and bequeath unto my four children Joseph, Nathan, Hetty and Mahalah sixty acres of land to be divided…"

The will also appears to name a पत्नी—likely **Flora (possibly "Floraugh")**, though the handwriting is difficult to interpret.

Reconstructing the Family Unit

Based on these records, we can tentatively identify:

- **Father**: Edward (or Edmund) McGuire
- **Mother**: Possibly Flora/Floraugh
- **Children**:
  - Joseph McGuire
  - Nathan McGuire
  - Hetty (Hettie) McGuire
  - Mahala (Mahalah) McGuire

The Crawford–Shankland Connection

Here's where things get interesting.

The repeated involvement of **James Crawford** as guardian—and **David Shankland** as surety—suggests a close relationship. In my files, I have a record showing that in 1817, David Shankland married **Sarah Crawford** in Preble County, Ohio. Sarah was the daughter of **James and Martha (Knight) Crawford**.

That connection raises an important possibility:

👉 Could this James Crawford—the husband of Martha Knight—be the same man appointed guardian of the McGuire children?

If so, it suggests a network of relationships between the Crawford, Shankland, and McGuire families.

A Friday Find… and a Mystery

Despite these clues, this McGuire family does not appear (yet!) on the FamilySearch Tree. That leaves several unanswered questions:

- Who exactly was **Edward/Edmund McGuire**?
- What happened to **Joseph McGuire**, noted as deceased by 1829?
- How were the McGuires connected to **James Crawford** and **David Shankland**?

This is one of those finds that opens more doors than it closes—and that's what makes it fun.

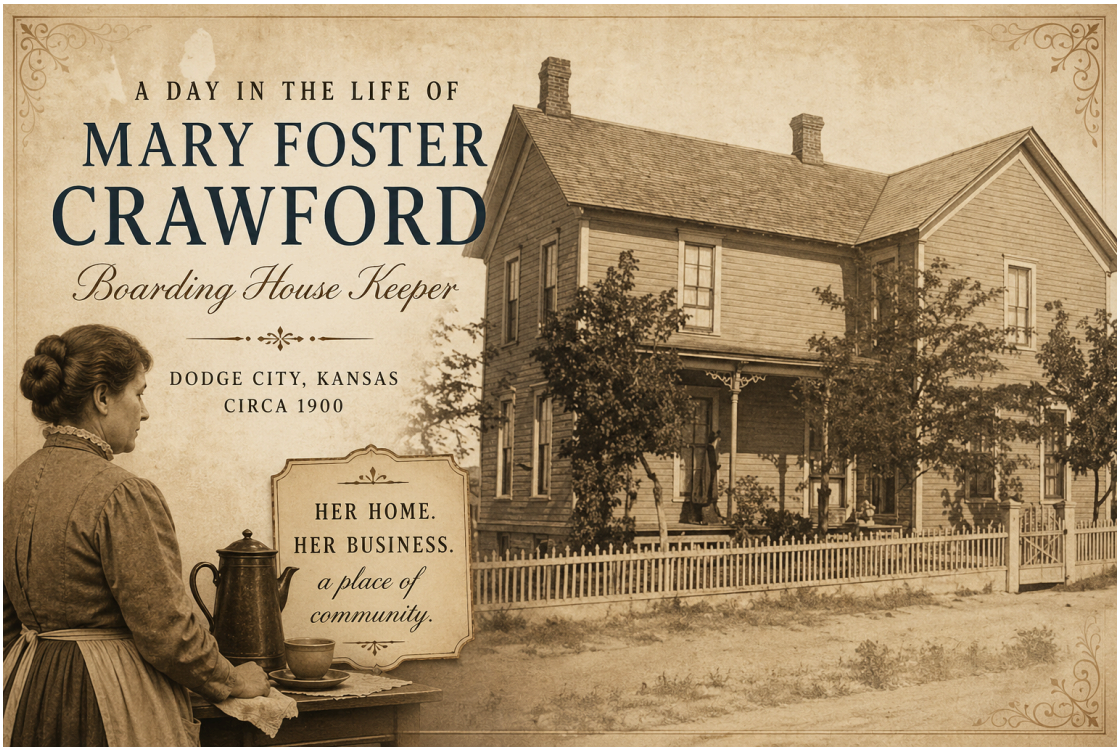
🔍 **It's a mystery worth chasing.**

Sources:

- Gilbert, Audrey. Preble County, Ohio Common Pleas Court Records 1808-1840: Volume 1.
- "Preble, Ohio, United States records," images, FamilySearch (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89QP-G87B?view=explore : Apr 25, 2026), image 50 of 412; Wright State University. Image Group Number: 005880598
- "Preble, Ohio, United States records," images, FamilySearch (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99Q5-4XYC?view=explore : Apr 25, 2026), image 45 of 801; Wright State University. Image Group Number: 005880605
- "Preble, Ohio, United States records," images, FamilySearch (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99QG-LW7Y?view=explore : Apr 25, 2026), image 17 of 193; Ohio. County Court (Preble County). Image Group Number: 005868427

A Day in the Life of Mary Crawford

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 2, 2026
Crawford,Dodge City
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/02/a-day-in-the-life-of-mary-crawford/



Boarding House Keeper in Dodge City — circa 1900

When we think about our ancestors, it is easy to focus on the major events—the marriages, the deaths, the moves from one place to another. But what did their *daily lives* look like?

For Mary Foster Crawford, daily life was defined by work, resilience, and the steady rhythm of running a boarding house in Dodge City, Kansas. After the death of her husband, Washington Marion Crawford, in 1889, Mary continued operating the boarding house he had built at the corner of Second Avenue and Elm Street—a responsibility that became her livelihood.

What might a typical day have looked like for Mary around 1900?

Morning Comes Early

Morning comes early in Mary Foster Crawford's household.

Before the sun has fully risen over the plains of western Kansas, Mary is already awake. The house—quiet for only a moment—will soon come alive with the sounds of a boarding house: footsteps overhead, doors opening, the clatter of washbasins, and voices drifting down the stairwell.

Mary moves first to the kitchen—located, as planned when the house was built, in the basement. It is practical, if not glamorous. Here she begins the day's work: stoking the stove, heating water, and preparing breakfast for those who pay for a place at her table. Bread, coffee, perhaps eggs or salt pork if supplies allow—simple, filling food for working men and travelers passing through a town that still carries echoes of its frontier past.

By the time her boarders begin to gather, Mary has already been working for hours.

A House in Motion

She greets each boarder with quiet efficiency. Some are regulars—railroad men, laborers, or clerks—others temporary lodgers drawn to Dodge City by opportunity. She knows who prefers strong coffee, who rises late, and who must be out the door at first light.

Her home is both business and refuge, and she manages it with practiced skill.

After breakfast, the house empties.

Mary clears the table, washes dishes, and begins the steady work of keeping rooms in order. Beds must be made, linens aired, floors swept. The boarding house, once built by her husband as a family enterprise, has become her responsibility alone.

Her children are grown or growing. Ida and Judson are adults. Lida is nearing independence. Young Nelson—once a small boy in the household—is now a young man still living at home around the time Mary advertised rooms for rent in 1899 . The household has changed over the years, but the work has not.

Midday Responsibilities

Midday offers little rest.

There are errands to run—supplies to purchase, accounts to manage, and arrangements to make with potential renters. Mary's advertisement offering "two furnished rooms for light housekeeping" reflects both necessity and adaptability. Not all tenants want full board; some prefer independence, and Mary adjusts her business accordingly.

Every room in the house serves a purpose.

Preparing for Evening

As afternoon light filters through the windows, Mary prepares for the busiest part of her day.

Supper must be planned and cooked. The stove is lit again, and the familiar cycle resumes. When the boarders return, they bring with them the dust of the streets and the stories of the day—railroad news, town gossip, talk of business and weather.

Mary listens, perhaps adding a word here or there, but always with one eye on the table and the needs of her household.

A House Full of Life

Evening is when the boarding house feels most alive.

Plates are filled and cleared, coffee is poured, and conversation hums through the house. For many of her boarders, this is more than a place to sleep—it is a place of routine, stability, and human connection.

Under Mary's care, the house becomes a temporary home for many.

The Day's End

When the last dish is washed and the house grows quiet again, Mary's work is not quite finished.

She checks the doors, banks the stove, and perhaps sits for a moment in the stillness—a rare pause in a day defined by constant labor. The boarding house stands as a testament to endurance: built in 1885, shaped by loss after her husband's death, and sustained through her determination.

Tomorrow will be much the same.

And Mary will rise before dawn once again.

Final Thoughts

Mary Foster Crawford's life reminds us that survival on the Kansas plains required more than courage—it required persistence, adaptability, and an extraordinary work ethic.

Her boarding house was not just a business. It was the means by which she supported her family and created a place of community for others in a growing western town.

And in the quiet repetition of her daily work, she built a legacy just as meaningful as any recorded event.

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 3, 2026
Crawford,Dodge City
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/03/saturday-night-genealogy-fun-198/

Life During the Great Depression

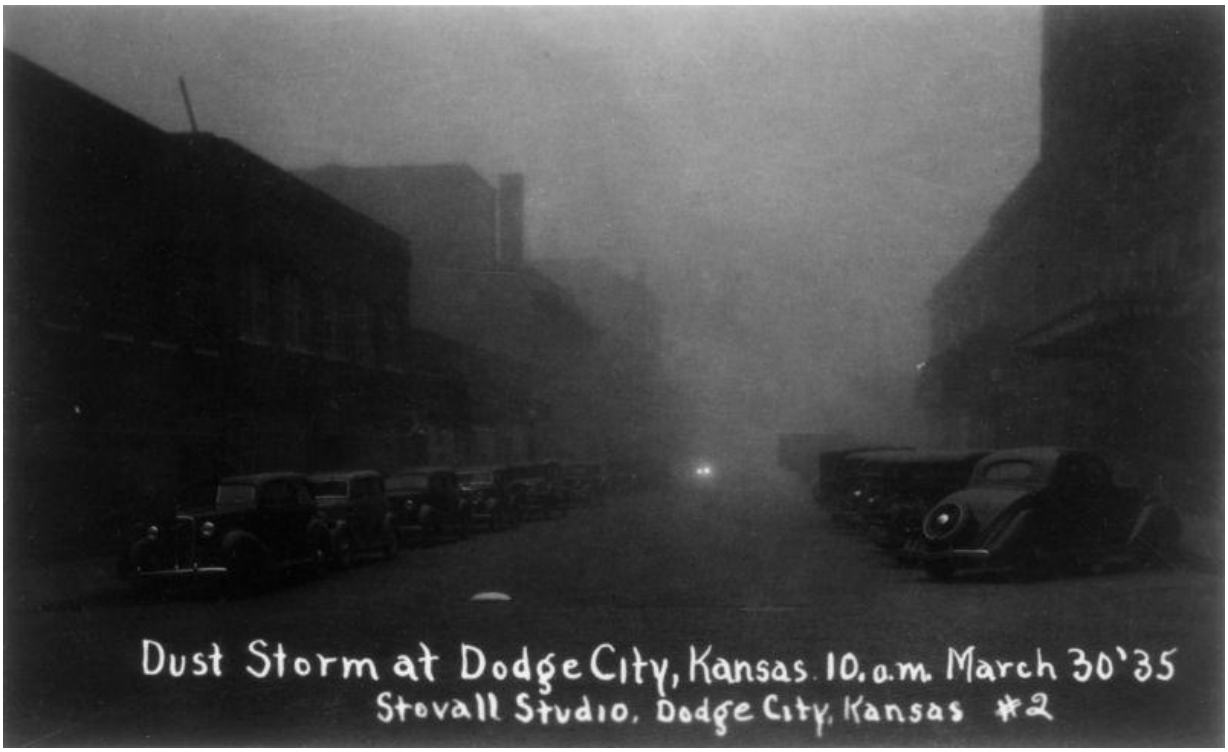
When I look at my grandfather, **Leon Russel Crawford**, during the years of the Great Depression (1930–1940), the records tell a story of **steady employment—but not necessarily an easy life**.

Leon lived in **Dodge City** throughout the 1930s and worked as a **switchman for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad**. Census records show that he held this same occupation in both 1930 and 1940, and additional records confirm that he continued working in the railroad yards during the mid-1930s.

On the surface, this suggests stability. At a time when many Americans lost their jobs, Leon appears to have **kept steady work and remained in the same community**. His family life also continued to move forward—they welcomed a son in 1938, right in the midst of the Depression.

But life in Dodge City during the 1930s came with a different kind of hardship.

Living Through the Dust Bowl



Leon and his family were living in Dodge City during the height of the **Dust Bowl**, one of the most devastating environmental disasters in American history.

One of the most infamous days occurred on **April 14, 1935—"Black Sunday."**

That afternoon, a massive wall of dust swept across the plains toward Dodge City. What began as a clear day quickly turned into darkness as a **towering black cloud of soil rolled into town**, driven by powerful winds. Within minutes:

- Daylight disappeared
- Visibility dropped to near zero
- Dust filled homes, even through closed doors and windows
- Families scrambled to protect themselves from choking air

This was not a one-time event. Dust storms were frequent, relentless, and disruptive. Even for families like Leon's—who had steady employment—daily life meant coping with:

- Dust covering furniture, food, and clothing
- Breathing difficulties and health concerns
- Limited travel and outdoor activity
- The constant uncertainty of when the next storm would strike

---

📽️ Black Sunday – Video Context

https://youtube.com/watch?v=yyExSjvwkU4

This video helps visualize what Leon and his family may have experienced in Dodge City during that storm and throughout the Dust Bowl years.

📄 Conclusion

Leon Russel Crawford's experience during the Great Depression shows that **economic stability did not shield families from hardship**.

- He **kept his job** with the railroad
- He **maintained his household in Dodge City**
- His family **continued to grow**

Yet at the same time, they lived through the Dust Bowl—enduring conditions that turned ordinary days into moments of crisis.

His story is a reminder that during the 1930s, survival was not only about employment—it was also about **endurance in the face of an unforgiving environment**.

Dust Bowl Resources

- Black Sunday – Legends of Dodge City
- Dust Bowl Oral History Project – Ford County

Monday's Diggings

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 4, 2026
Hutchinson,Madison County NY,Wells
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/04/mondays-diggings-31/

An Unplaced Biography of Captain David Wells Hutchinson

Have you ever found something in your files that *should* be incredibly useful… but raises more questions than it answers?

That's exactly what happened when I came across an old, unsourced biography of **Captain David Wells Hutchinson (1830–1894)**. It appears to be from a county or biographical history (page numbers 147–148), but unfortunately, no title page or source citation was saved with it.

And now—it has turned into a bit of a genealogy puzzle.

📜 The Discovery

The biography provides a detailed account of Captain Hutchinson's life, including:

- Birth: June 21, 1830, Girard, Erie County, Pennsylvania
- Parents: Judge Myron Hutchinson and Nancy Wells
- Education: Kingsville Academy (Ohio), National Law School (Poughkeepsie, NY)
- Civil War service: 83rd Pennsylvania Volunteers
- Career: Attorney, land agent for the Nickel Plate Railroad, U.S. Land Office official
- Death: January 19, 1894, Erie County, Pennsylvania

But for me, the most intriguing part is this statement:

> *"the judge's wife was of distinguished New England lineage, being a blood relative of General Nathaniel Greene of Revolutionary fame."*

That one sentence opens the door to a much larger question.

🔍 The Genealogical Puzzle

On FamilySearch Family Tree, David Wells Hutchinson appears here:
👉 https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/details/K2XP-VX6

According to that tree, his mother Nancy (Wells) Hutchinson descends from:

- **Thurston Wells**
- wife: Irene Badger

So far, so good… except this is where things get messy.

⚖️ Conflicting Parentage of Thurston Wells

In my own research, I have:

- **Thurston Wells**
  - son of **Nathaniel Wells** and **Mary Thurston**

This line would make Thurston my **4th great granduncle**.

However, the FamilySearch Tree currently:

- disconnects Thurston from Nathaniel Wells & Mary Thurston
- and instead associates him with:
  - **Nathaniel Wells**
  - wife: **Jemima Treat**

Two different Nathani el Wells families… two different wives… and likely two different lineages.

🧩 The Bigger Question: A Greene Connection?

Here's where it gets even more interesting.

Both:

- this biography
- and a previously discussed obituary

state that Nancy (Wells) Hutchinson was related to:

👉 General Nathanael Greene

Now here's the twist:

➡️ My own Wells line is *also* said to connect to General Greene
➡️ But I have **not been able to prove that connection**

So now I'm left wondering:

- Are these two Wells lines actually connected?
- Or are there **two unrelated Wells families**, each claiming (accurately or not) descent from Greene?
- And which Nathaniel Wells family does Thurston actually belong to?

📄 Transcription of the Biography

Below is a clean transcription of the biography as it appears in my files (pages 147–148). I am including it here in full in hopes that someone may recognize the source.

Captain David Wells Hutchinson

Captain D. W. Hutchinson, son of Judge Myron and Nancy (Wells) Hutchinson, was born at Girard, Erie County, Pa., June 21, 1830. His father, a native of Madison County, New York, was a pioneer settler of Girard and became a justice of the peace and also an associate judge of Erie County. The judge's father was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, the judge's wife was of distinguished New England lineage, being a blood relative of General Nathaniel Greene of Revolutionary fame. The Hutchinson family was of unusual prominence.

One of the judge's daughters became the wife of the late David Olin of Girard, a prominent merchant and one of our county's foremost men. Another daughter became the wife of John Clemens of Erie, in his day, a prominent manufacturer and highly honored citizen. David W. was educated in the schools of Girard and at Kingsville, Ohio, Academy. He studied law with Hon. George H. Cutler and was also a graduate of the National Law School at Poughkeepsie, New York. He was admitted to the New York State Bar May 11, 1853, and on May 11, 1855, to our bar, when he entered upon the practice with offices at Girard.

Captain Hutchinson was a very patriotic citizen and I believe organized a company at the breaking out of the civil war. He was also a distinguished member of the Eighty-Third Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers and won his title of "Captain" by heroic services. After the war he resumed his practice at Girard. He was a sound lawyer and a thorough gentleman of the highest type. He was tall, of slight build and most agreeable personal-

ty. He had the entire confidence of bench and bar, but seldom appeared in the trial of causes, his practice being largely confined to the office where he faithfully served many clients. He looked after the settlement of many estates and when the railroad known as the Nickel Plate was located through Erie County, about 1881, he was employed to secured the right of way. In this capacity he rendered the railroad company highly valuable services, but was also just to the land owners, for in the majority of cases, where litigation resulted, it appeared in the end that the Captain had made fair offers for the property. In 1886, probably at the suggestion of Hon. William L. Scott, he was appointed Receiver of Public Monies, United States Land Office at Bismark, Dakota, and ably discharged the duties of that office for four years. Returning home he again took up the practice of law in this county.

On November 25, 1861, he was united in marriage with Miss Mary T. Kaiser, of Girard. They had six children, three sons and three daughters, two died in infancy and the survivors are Myron Wells, Irene Elizabeth (now Mrs. Adelbert B. Gray, Frank Joseph and James Monroe Hutchinson. Captain Hutchinson, after the example of his father was a Universalist in religion, and a Democrat in politics. He died in Erie January 19, 1894, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and was buried in the Girard Cemetery. He enjoyed the companionship of his friends, was fond of cards and dancing, but not much given to athletics. Probably no member of our bar ever lived a more upright life or left a more spotless record than David Wells Hutchinson.

🧠 Working Hypotheses

At this point, I see a few possibilities:

1. **Thurston Wells = son of Nathaniel Wells & Mary Thurston**
   - Would connect him to my existing Wells line
   - May explain the shared Greene tradition
2. **Thurston Wells = son of Nathaniel Wells & Jemima Treat**
   - Suggests a different Wells line entirely
   - Greene connection may come through a different path
3. **The Greene connection is exaggerated or misattributed**
   - Not uncommon in late 19th-century county histories

📣 A Call for Help

This is where I'd love your input.

- 📚 Does anyone recognize this biography or its source?
- 🌳 Have you researched this **Wells / Hutchinson line**?
- 🧬 Do you have documentation connecting this family to **General Nathanael Greene**?
- 🔍 Have you encountered Thurston Wells in New England or New York records?

Even a clue about the **book title or county history** would be incredibly helpful.

🗒️ Why This Matters

This is a great reminder of something we all encounter in genealogy:

> A detailed biography is only as useful as the sources behind it.

Right now, this document is:

- Rich in detail
- Potentially accurate
- But **completely unsourced**

And until I can place it in context, it remains a clue—not proof.

✍️ Final Thoughts

This find sits right at the intersection of:

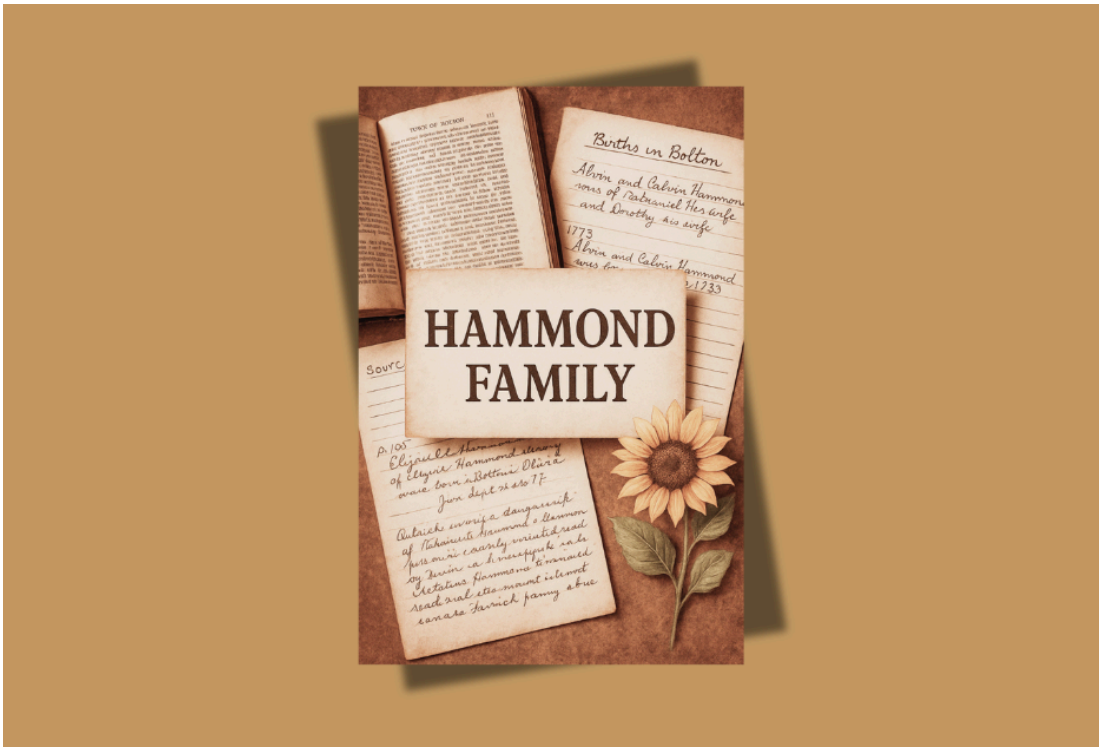
- family tradition
- published biography
- and modern collaborative trees

And somewhere in that mix… is the truth.

I'll keep digging—and I hope you will too.

Bringing Sarah's Story to Life with AI

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 5, 2026
Hammond,Ralston
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/05/bringing-sarahs-story-to-life-with-ai/



Audio & Infographic Video

One of the things I've come to appreciate about using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in genealogy is how it can highlight details I might otherwise overlook.

I recently took the narrative report for **Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond**—a document filled with carefully researched facts, dates, and places—and uploaded it into Google Notebook LM to see what it might reveal.

The result? A completely new way of experiencing her story.

From Narrative to Audio

Using Notebook LM, I generated an **audio overview** of Sarah's life.

Hearing her story spoken aloud brings a different perspective. The timeline feels more connected. The movement from Pennsylvania to Illinois, then Iowa, and finally Kansas becomes more than a list of locations—it becomes a journey.

Details that might blend together on the page stand out when heard:

- A young girl moving west with her family
- A marriage beginning on New Year's Day
- A large family raised across multiple states
- Years of illness endured with faith

It's the same information—but experienced differently.

Visualizing the Story

In addition to the audio, Notebook LM also created an **infographic** summarizing key elements of Sarah's life.

The infographic distills her story into a visual format:

- Major life events
- Geographic movement
- Family connections

It's a quick way to grasp the overall arc of her life—something that complements the deeper detail found in the narrative report.

Bringing It Together in Video Form

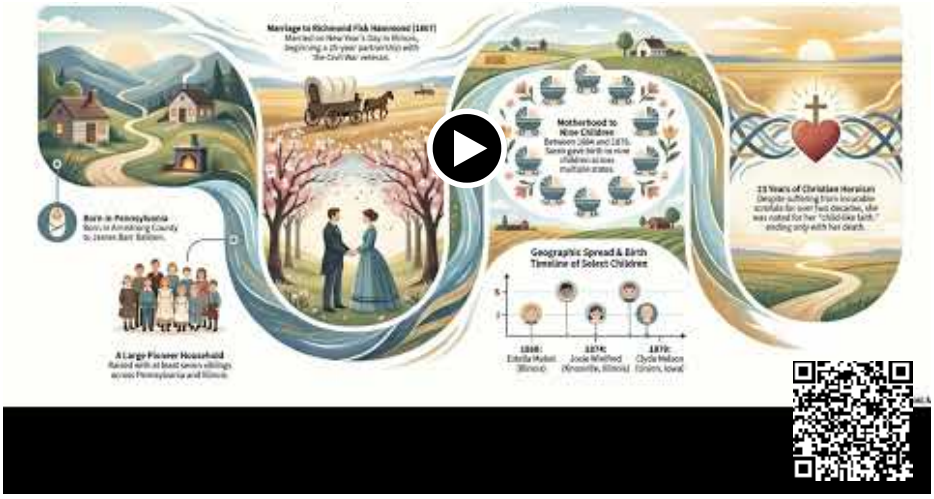
To combine these elements, I used Canva to create a simple video:

- The **audio overview** provides the narrative
- The **infographic** provides the visual anchor

Together, they create a short presentation that tells Sarah's story in a format that is easy to share with family members who may not read a full written biography.

Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond – Audio & Infographic Video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=TvSJ7vA-MnY



Why This Approach Works

As genealogists, we often work in text—documents, reports, transcriptions. But not everyone connects with written material in the same way.

This approach offers another option:

- **Audio** for those who prefer listening
- **Visuals** for those who like quick summaries
- **Video** for easy sharing

It doesn't replace traditional research or writing—but it enhances how we present and share our findings.

Final Thoughts

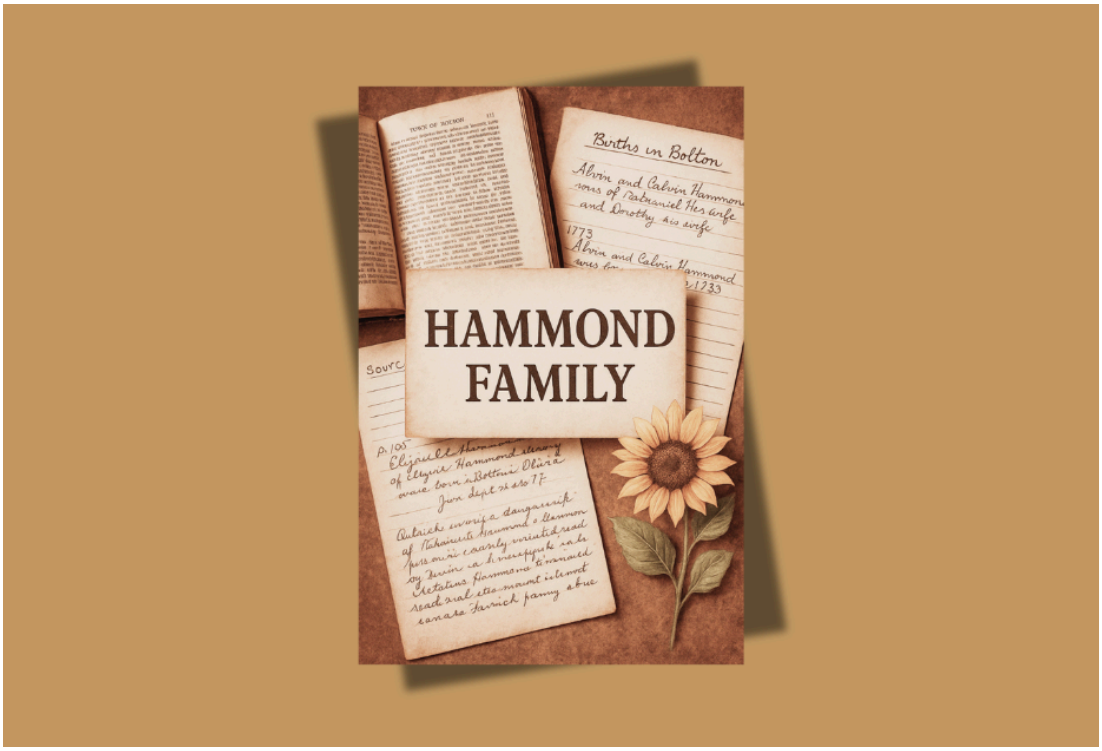
What I find most interesting about this process is that it doesn't add new information—it simply presents the existing research in a new way.

And sometimes, that new perspective is enough to see an ancestor's life more clearly.

For Sarah, it's another step in telling her story—not just as a series of facts, but as a life that unfolded across time and place.

A Time in the Life of Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 6, 2026
Dodge City,Hammond,Ralston
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/06/a-time-in-the-life-of-sarah-ellen-ralston-hammond/



Her Long Illness

As genealogists, we often encounter brief phrases in obituaries that hint at long and difficult stories. One such phrase appears in the obituary of my 2nd great-grandmother, Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond:

> "…three years after Mrs. Hammond developed the incurable form of scrofula from which for 23 years, she was a sufferer…"

What did those 23 years look like?

The following is a glimpse into Sarah's life in Dodge City during the late 1880s—after the family's move west, but before her children began marrying and starting families of their own.

A Time in the Life of Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond

Dodge City, Kansas — about 1887

The Kansas wind carried dust against the small Hammond home, rattling the door as Sarah Ellen Hammond paused in her work. She steadied herself against the table and waited—just a moment—for her strength to return.

It had been years now—so many years that she could scarcely remember life before the illness.

Not long after her marriage, when her first children were still small, the disease had come. The doctors called it **scrofula**, a lingering and often incurable affliction that settled into the glands of the neck. At first, it was only swelling. Then came the weakness, the pain, and the slow wearing down of her strength. By the time the family made their way west to Kansas, it had already become a part of her life—something she carried each day, quietly and without complaint.

By 1887, Sarah was nearing forty, though the years of illness had etched themselves into her face and frame. Around her, life pressed forward. Estella was nearly grown, Forest not far behind, and the younger children—Nellie, Josie, and Clyde—filled the house with movement and noise. There was work to be done, meals to prepare, clothes to mend. And Sarah, despite her condition, remained at the center of it all.

She moved more slowly now. There were moments when the swelling in her neck flared painfully, when fatigue came on so suddenly she had to stop and rest. Some days were better than others. On the harder days, she paced herself carefully, choosing what must be done and what could wait.

Richmond was often away—working land, building, taking contracts, doing whatever was needed to secure a future for his family in this new Kansas home. Yet his devotion to Sarah showed in the life they built together. He had stood beside her through years of illness, tending to her as best he could, sacrificing comfort and ease so she might have a measure of both.

Evenings brought a quieter kind of strength. When the work of the day was finished, Sarah found comfort in her faith. It had sustained her through years of suffering—through the loss of a child, through the constant presence of disease, through the uncertainty of frontier life. She believed there was purpose in endurance, that even in pain there could be peace.

Those around her saw it. They saw the patience with which she bore her illness, the calm that settled over her even in discomfort. It was not that she did not suffer—she did, deeply and daily—but that she endured it with a steady and quiet resolve.

Outside, the prairie stretched wide and unyielding. Inside, Sarah shaped a home filled with care and faith, even as her strength slowly diminished.

Living. Enduring. Believing.

Understanding Scrofula

In the 19th century, **scrofula** was the name given to a form of tuberculosis that affected the lymph nodes, especially in the neck. It often caused visible swelling, chronic infection, and long-term physical decline. The disease could persist for years—sometimes decades—as it did in Sarah's case.

At the time, there was no effective cure. Treatments were limited, and many sufferers endured a slow, lingering illness. Despite this, individuals like Sarah were often remembered not only for their suffering, but for their endurance—something clearly reflected in her obituary.

Final Thoughts

It is easy to read a single line in an obituary and move on. But behind that line—"a sufferer for 23 years"—was a life lived in the midst of hardship.

Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond was not defined solely by her illness. She was a wife, a mother of six, and a woman of deep faith who helped build a life for her family on the Kansas frontier. Her story reminds us that even in the face of long and difficult trials, there is strength in endurance and meaning in the everyday moments of life.

From Managing Windows PCs to Choosing My Own Mac

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 7, 2026
Artificial Intelligence
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/07/from-managing-windows-pcs-to-choosing-my-own-mac/

A personal transition—this time with a little help from ChatGPT

There was a time when I was responsible for over one hundred Windows desktops serving roughly two hundred students. As the technology coordinator for our local high school, I spent my days imaging machines, troubleshooting networks, installing software, and making sure everything worked when the bell rang.

Later in my career, we made a significant shift—moving students to Mac laptops. It was a big transition at the time, but one that ultimately simplified many aspects of our environment. Still, we held onto a few Windows machines for specialized programs like CAD that didn't yet have viable Mac equivalents.

Fast forward to today, and I find myself in a familiar—but very different—position. Instead of managing a school-wide transition, I'm making a personal one: moving from my Windows laptop to a Mac.

A Different Kind of Transition

What's striking is how different this process feels.

Back then, transitions were about:

- Standardization
- Deployment at scale
- Managing user accounts and permissions
- Ensuring compatibility across a network

Now, the questions are much more personal:

- Will my software work?
- How do I move years of files and research?
- What hardware do I actually need?
- How do I maintain my workflow?

And perhaps most interestingly:

- Where do I even begin comparing all of this?

Enter ChatGPT

In my earlier career, research meant:

- Vendor documentation
- User forums
- Trial and error
- A lot of time

This time, I turned to **ChatGPT** as my primary sounding board.

Not as a replacement for experience—but as a way to:

- Ask targeted questions
- Explore “what if” scenarios
- Compare options quickly
- Think through decisions before acting

The Questions I Asked

My conversations ranged widely:

Hardware considerations

- MacBook Air vs MacBook Pro
- RAM differences (16 GB vs 32 GB)
- Storage needs (512 GB vs 1 TB vs 2 TB)

Compatibility

- Would my older hardware still work?
    - Scanner (ScanSnap iX500)
    - Photo scanner (Epson V600)
    - Printer (HP LaserJet 1200)
- Would my USB hubs and docking stations connect properly?

Software transitions

- Is there a Mac version of what I use?
    - RootsMagic
    - Scrivener
    - Microsoft Office
    - Quicken
- What about tools that *don’t* exist on Mac?
    - Paint.NET
    - Second Copy
    - KeePass

Workflow questions

- How should I structure my cloud storage?
    - Dropbox vs OneDrive vs iDrive
- How do I avoid duplicate files?
- What’s the safest way to migrate everything?

What I Found Most Helpful

What surprised me most wasn’t just the answers—it was the **process**.

ChatGPT allowed me to:

- Break a large decision into manageable pieces
- Ask follow-up questions immediately
- Refine my thinking as I went
- Explore options I hadn't considered

For example:

- I learned that 16 GB of RAM on a Mac behaves differently than on Windows
- I discovered how DisplayLink enables multiple monitors on a MacBook Air
- I clarified how to separate working files (Dropbox) from backup systems (iDrive)
- I identified safer ways to clean up duplicate files before migrating

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Experience Still Matters

What I brought to the table was just as important.

Years of experience meant I could:

- Ask better questions
- Recognize when something didn't quite sound right
- Understand trade-offs
- Think about long-term implications

ChatGPT didn't replace that experience—it **amplified it**.

A Familiar Path, A New Approach

In many ways, this transition mirrors what I experienced years ago:

- Evaluating hardware
- Testing compatibility
- Planning migrations
- Supporting workflows

But this time:

- I'm the only user
- The stakes are personal
- The decisions are mine alone

And instead of coordinating a faculty rollout, I'm coordinating my own digital life.

Final Thoughts

If there's one takeaway from this process, it's this:

> The tools we use to make decisions have evolved just as much as the technology itself.

Where I once relied on manuals and forums, I now have a conversational partner that helps me think through complex decisions in real time.

As I complete this transition to Mac, I'm reminded that while the hardware and software change, the core principles remain the same:

- Plan carefully
- Test thoughtfully
- Keep good backups
- And always be willing to learn something new

Looking Ahead

My next steps:

- Finalize hardware decisions
- Clean up and migrate files
- Set up my Mac environment
- Rebuild my workflow

And perhaps most importantly:

- Continue asking good questions

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 8, 2026
Crawford,Kentucky,Madison County,Maxwell
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/08/friday-find-115/

A Treasury Warrant for James Crawford

Today's find from my Crawford files is a photocopy of a page from the book *Land Entries for Madison County, Kentucky, 1780–1793*. At first glance, this appeared to be just another Crawford reference. But as is often the case, a closer look revealed something more—it also included a member of my Crawford **FAN club**: Bezeleel Maxwell.

Below is my transcription of the entries for Bezeleel Maxwell and James Crawford:

June 28
Bezeleel Maxwell & John Downing [Downing?] enters 1000 acres of land upon two Treasury Warrants Nos. 9321 & 9319 lying on the deviding ridge between the waters of Paint Lick & Silver Creek joining James Douney's & Campbell's entry of 2000 acres on the south side and to extend up the said ridge for quantity and to include the Heads of both waters for the said quantity.

James Crawford & John Downing enters 600 acres of land upon a T. W. No 9324 to adjoin the said Downing's former Entry of 875 acres made for William Campbell on the north east side of Sugar Creek and on the north & east side of said Entry and to extend north & east for the quantity to include a body of black oak woods for said quantity.

June 28
Bezeleel Maxwell & John Downing [Downing?] enters 500 acres of land upon a T. W. No 9317 to adjoin John Downing's Survey of 300 acres on the Middle Fork of Sugar Creek on the lower or northwardly and to extend down northwardly to include the middle Fork of Sugar Creek for quantity.

Following the Trail

This seemingly simple find sent me down a familiar—and rewarding—research path.

I was able to locate **images of these entries** in two places:

- *"Madison, Kentucky, United States records,"* FamilySearch (image 13 of 70)
- *Lincoln and Fayette County land entries, 1779–1817* (including May's land entries)

From there, I turned to the **Kentucky Land Office Index** for Virginia Treasury Warrants. The warrants themselves—Nos. 9317, 9319, 9321, and 9324—were indexed, but notably, the **"authorized patent" field was blank** for each.

That absence raised an important question.

Continuing the search, I located the original warrant entry for James Crawford in the Virginia records:

- *Registers, old treasury warrants, nos. 1–23087* (image 723 on FamilySearch)

A Description Worth Noting

Although I have not yet located a survey or patent for James Crawford's 600 acres, the **land description itself is intriguing**.

The entry places the tract:

- On the **northeast side of Sugar Creek**
- Adjacent to an earlier 875-acre entry connected to William Campbell
- Near land associated with John Downing and Bezeleel Maxwell

This immediately caught my attention.

In my earlier research:

- **Mary Crawford** purchased land along Sugar Creek
- **Rebekah Crawford** acquired land on the headwaters of Sugar and Boones Creek

The clustering of these names and locations suggests a possible geographic—and perhaps familial—connection worth exploring further.

What Does the Missing Patent Mean?

The lack of an associated patent may indicate that:

- The land was never surveyed
- The claim was abandoned or reassigned
- Or the warrant was used elsewhere (a common occurrence)

In other words, **James Crawford may never have taken legal ownership of this tract**, despite the entry.

Why This Matters

Even without a final patent, this record is far from insignificant.

It:

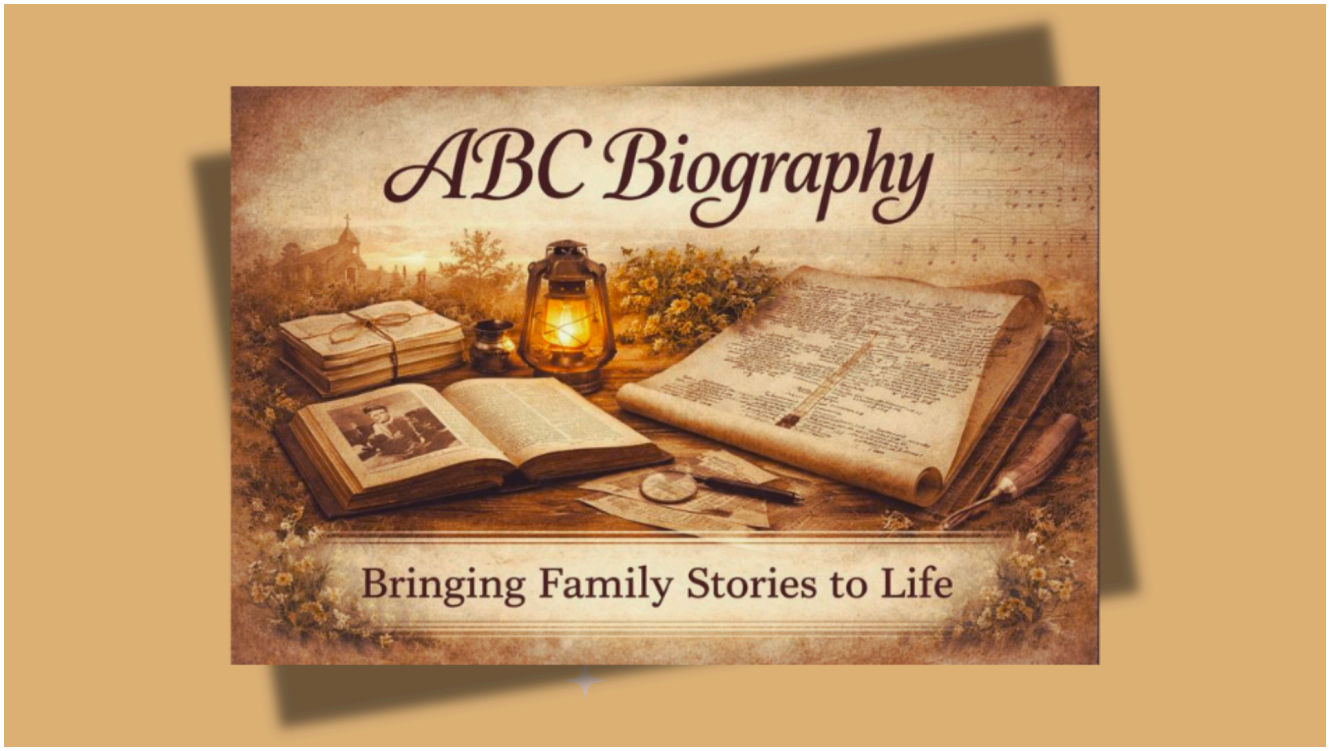
- Places James Crawford in a specific **time and place (Madison County, 1780s)**
- Connects him to known **FAN club members** like Bezeleel Maxwell and John Downing
- Provides **geographic clues** tied to other Crawford-associated land

And perhaps most importantly—it opens new avenues for research.

Sometimes the value of a record isn't in what it confirms, but in the **questions it raises**.

ABC Biography Project

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 9, 2026
ABC Biography,Artificial Intelligence
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/09/abc-biography-project/



One of my goals with the **ABC Biography** project has been to make my family history more accessible—both for myself and for others who may be exploring these lines. But as more biographies are added, they can be difficult to locate across individual posts.

This page brings them together in one place.

Starting with my 3rd and 4th generation ancestors, and extending forward through the descendants of those 4th-generation lines, I've created a structure that allows each person to be connected to their **ABC Biography**. Think of this as a guide—or index—to the growing collection of stories that make up this branch of my family.

Generation 3

4. **Leon Russel Crawford-9785**: born 6 February 1894 in Newton, Harvey, Kansas, United States; married 24 December 1919 in Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States; died 3 October 1976 in Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

5. **Winnie Letha Currey-9786**: born 30 June 1903 in Lansing, Leavenworth, Kansas, United States; died 11 February 1992 in Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song / Overview

6. **Edward Osmond Briles-9795**: born 21 June 1891 in Burlington, Coffey, Kansas, United States; married 29 October 1915 in Yates Center, Woodson, Kansas, United States; died 28 May 1956 in Emporia, Lyon, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

7. **Pauline Edith Mentzer-9796**: born 28 March 1896 in Woodson, Kansas, United States; died 16 July 1984 in Emporia, Lyon, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

Generation 4

8. **Judson Foster Crawford-177**: born 15 April 1866 in Warren, Indiana, United States; married 24 December 1890 in Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States; died 19 February 1949 in Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography

9. **Josie Winifred Hammond-178**: born 9 February 1874 in Knoxville, Knox, Illinois, United States; died 27 September 1954 in Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

. . . . . 2-**Bernice Crawford-179** – ABC Biography

b: 4 March 1892, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

d: 2 August 1959, Kelseyville, Lake, California, United States

. . . . . 2-**Leon Russel Crawford-9785** – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

b: 6 February 1894, Newton, Harvey, Kansas, United States

d: 3 October 1976, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Marion Richmond Crawford-189** – ABC Biography

b: 24 October 1895, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

d: 29 July 1920, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Helen Marjorie Crawford-181** – ABC Biography

b: 30 April 1900, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

d: 1 November 1971, El Paso, El Paso, Texas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Hugh Judson Crawford-185** – ABC Biography, Song, Overview

b: 16 September 1902, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

d: 7 August 1987, Casa Grande, Pinal, Arizona, United States

. . . . . 2-**Esther Stella Crawford-187** – ABC Biography / Overview / Song

b: 6 February 1905, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

d: 7 July 1987, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Lois Elida Crawford-183** – ABC Biography, Song, Overview

b: 10 November 1909, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

d: 18 January 1972, Pueblo, Pueblo, Colorado, United States

10. **Hiram Miles Currey-502**: born 23 October 1866 in Missouri, United States; married 13 May 1891 in Kansas City, Jackson, Missouri, United States; died 15 September 1943 in Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

11. **Winifred Mae "Winnie" Hutchinson-503**: born 6 May 1871 in Osage, Mitchell, Iowa, United States; died 23 September 1913 in Olathe, Johnson, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography

. . . . . 2-**Infant Currey-504**

b: 18 April 1892

d: 10 May 1892

. . . . . 2-**Henry Currey-505** – ABC Biography

b: 25 May 1893, Liberty, Clay, Missouri, United States

d: 20 May 1906, Leavenworth, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Herbert Miles Currey-506** – ABC Biography

b: 3 April 1895, Liberty, Clay, Missouri, United States

d: 20 April 1971, Ontario, Malheur, Oregon, United States

. . . . . 2-**Hiram Currey-507**

b: 11 August 1897

d: 24 January 1898

. . . . . 2-**Myrtle Irene Currey-508** – ABC Biography

b: 11 January 1899, Pomeroy, Wyandotte, Kansas, United States

d: 23 July 1970, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Mary Lela Currey-509** – ABC Biography

b: 17 August 1901, Lansing, Leavenworth, Kansas, United States

d: 8 December 1977, Crown Manor Nursing Home, Zion, Lake, Illinois, United States

. . . . . 2-**Winnie Letha Currey-9786** – ABC Biography – Song / Overview

b: 30 June 1903, Lansing, Leavenworth, Kansas, United States

d: 11 February 1992, Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Earnest Oran Currey-510** – ABC Biography

b: 5 April 1906, Lansing, Leavenworth, Kansas, United States

d: 25 May 1979, Denver, Denver, Colorado, United States

. . . . . 2-**Alma Jean Currey-511** – ABC Biography

b: 5 April 1912, Plainville, Rooks, Kansas, United States

d: 7 September 1989, Good Samaritan Hospital, Phoenix, Maricopa, Arizona, United States

12. **Edward Grant Briles-2065**: born 18 July 1869 in Coffey, Kansas, United States; married 19 February 1890 in Woodson, Kansas, United States; died 23 July 1951 in Emporia, Lyon, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

- 13. **Frances Artlissa "Artie" Ricketts-2707**: born 7 April 1868 in Clinton, Indiana, United States; died 28 April 1947 in Yates Center, Woodson, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

. . . . . 2-**Edward Osmond Briles-9795** – ABC Biography

b: 21 June 1891, Burlington, Coffey, Kansas, United States

d: 28 May 1956, Emporia, Lyon, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Ethel Frances Briles-2708** – ABC Biography

b: 2 June 1893, Coffey, Kansas, United States

d: 15 August 1982, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, United States

. . . . . 2-**Glen Briles-4508** – ABC Biography

b: 6 March 1895, Woodson, Kansas, United States

d: 30 June 1983, Hays, Ellis, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Lulu Belle Briles-2067** – ABC Biography

b: 2 November 1899, Coffey, Kansas, United States

d: 8 October 1987, Yates Center, Woodson, Kansas, United States

14. **Charles Oliver Mentzer-1709**: born 1 July 1869 in Kewanee, Henry, Illinois, United States; married 18 October 1893 in Yates Center, Woodson, Kansas, United States; died 15 August 1955 in Emporia, Lyon, Kansas, United States. ABC Biography – Song/Overview

15. **Nettie Adell Wells-1710**: born 5 February 1873 in Woodson, Kansas, United States; died 9 February 1939 in Neosho Falls, Woodson, Kansas, United States. – ABC Biography – Song/Overview

. . . . . 2-**Gladys Olive Mentzer-1711** – ABC Biography

b: 9 July 1894, Woodson, Kansas, United States

d: 2 June 1977, Kansas Christian Home, Newton, Harvey, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Paul Emory Mentzer-1712** – ABC Biography

b: 28 March 1896, Yates Center, Woodson, Kansas, United States

d: 14 August 1942, Charles Maxwell Hospital, Lamar, Prowers, Colorado, United States

. . . . . 2-**Pauline Edith Mentzer-9796** – ABC Biography

b: 28 March 1896, Woodson, Kansas, United States

d: 16 July 1984, Emporia, Lyon, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Leslie George Mentzer-1713** – ABC Biography

b: 23 August 1898, Woodson, Kansas, United States

d: 19 April 1988, Countryside Estates, Iola, Allen, Kansas, United States

. . . . . 2-**Herbert Wells Mentzer-1714** – ABC Biography

b: 20 July 1900, a farm northwest of Yates Center, Woodson, Kansas, United States

d: 25 March 1977, Allen County Hospital, Iola, Allen, Kansas, United States

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 10, 2026
SaturdayNightGenealogyFun
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/10/saturday-2/

What Automobiles Did Your Ancestors Own?

Calling all Genea-Musings Fans:

It's Saturday Night again —
time for some more **Genealogy Fun!!**

Here is your assignment, if you choose to play along (cue the *Mission Impossible* music, please!):

1) What automobile models did your ancestors have? Pick an ancestor and share something about their cars.

When I was young, I didn't pay much attention to the cars my family owned. I simply knew that my parents had a car—usually a station wagon—and that my Crawford grandparents had a car that my grandmother drove while my grandfather rode along. My Briles grandmother was widowed, did not drive, and thus did not own a car.

As a young adult, however, I started paying closer attention to automobiles—mainly because I occasionally got to drive one of them!

Since I rode the school bus to and from high school, and later commuted to college with my father (who was also a teacher), I didn't drive very often. Around my junior year of high school, my parents acquired a second car: a blue Ford Fairlane. On Sundays, I was allowed to drive my grandmother to church, which made that car feel especially memorable.

The Fairlane may have been the second car, but my parents' primary family vehicle was a Ford Galaxie, chosen in part because its spacious back seat could accommodate three teenagers.

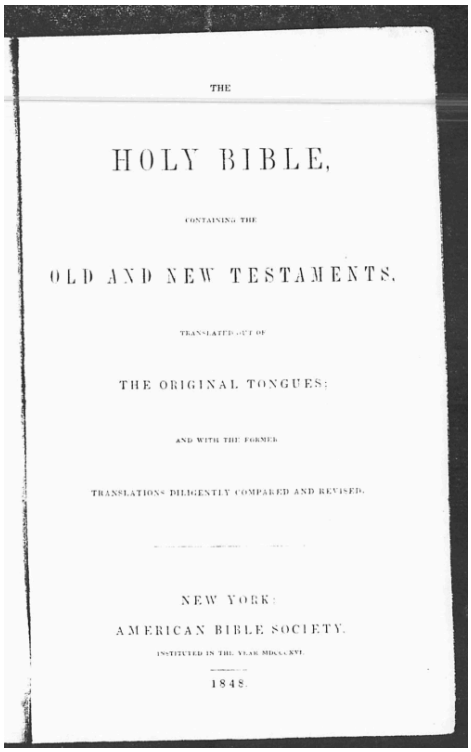
That Ford Galaxie did far more than ferry our family around town. It also carried my dad, my brother and his wife, me, and my husband to several regional meetings of the National Science Teachers Association. While my brother and sister-in-law didn't always join us, that dependable car took us on road trips to Denver, St. Louis, and Madison, Wisconsin.

Looking back, I realize that family cars were more than transportation—they were part of our family story, carrying us to church, school, conferences, and shared adventures.

Monday's Diggings

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 11, 2026
Hutchinson,Wells
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/11/mondays-diggings-32/

Today's find from my WELLS notebook is a Bible record for the David Hutchinson family. Below are the images from the Bible along with a transcription.


THE

HOLY BIBLE,

CONTAINING THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS,

TRANSLATED OUT OF

THE ORIGINAL TONGUES:

AND WITH THE FORMER

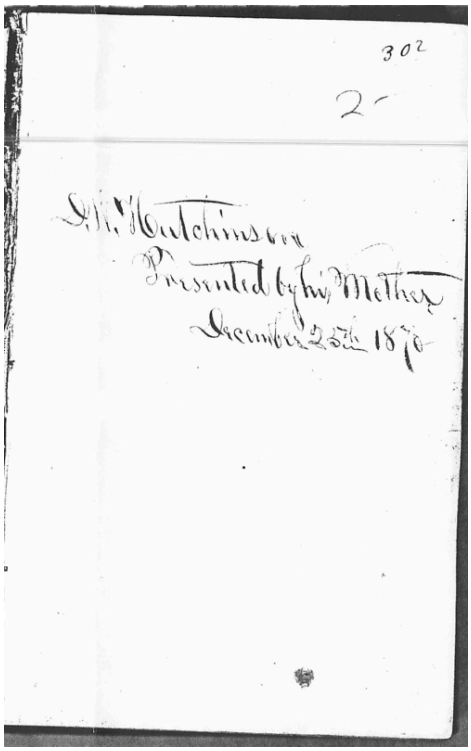
TRANSLATIONS DILIGENTLY COMPARED AND REVISED.

NEW YORK:

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY.

INSTITUTED IN THE YEAR MDCCCXVI

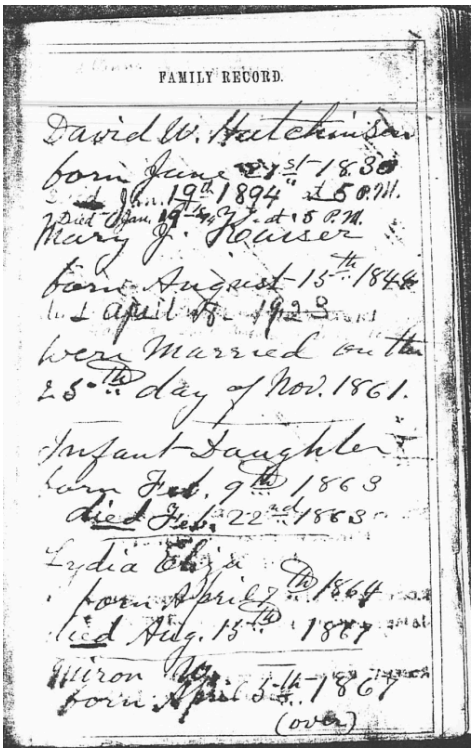
1848.



D. W. Hutchinson

Presented by his Mother

December 25th 1850



FAMILY RECORD.

David W. Hutchinson
born June 21st 1830
died Jan. 19th 1894 at 5 P.M.

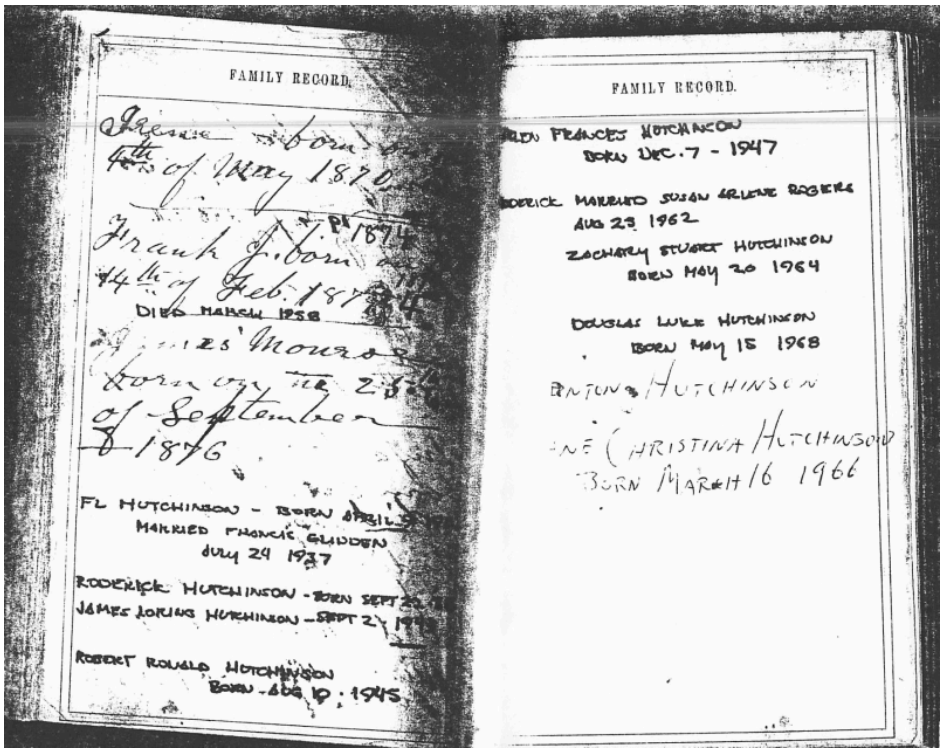
Mary J Kaiser
born August 15th 184[4]
d. April 18th 1928

were married on the
25th day of Nov. 1861.

Infant Daughter
born Feb. 9th 1863
died Feb. 22nd 1863

Lydia Eliza
born April 7th 1864
died Aug. 15th 1867

Miron W
born April 15 1867
(over)



FAMILY RECORD.

Jessie Born on
4th of May 1870

[1874]

Frank J. born on
14th of Feb. 1874
died March 1958

James Monreo
born on the 25th
of September
1876

F. L. Hutchinson — born April [illegible]
married Frances Glidden
[July] 24 1937

Roderick Hutchinson — born Sept. 22[illegible]

James Lo[uis] Hutchinson — Sept. 2, 194[3]

Robert Ronald Hutchinson
born Aug. 10, 1945

FAMILY RECORD.

[Allen] Frances Hutchinson
born Dec. 7, 1947

[Roderick] married [Arlene] Rogers
Aug. 23, 1962

Zachary Stuart Hutchinson
born May 20, 1964

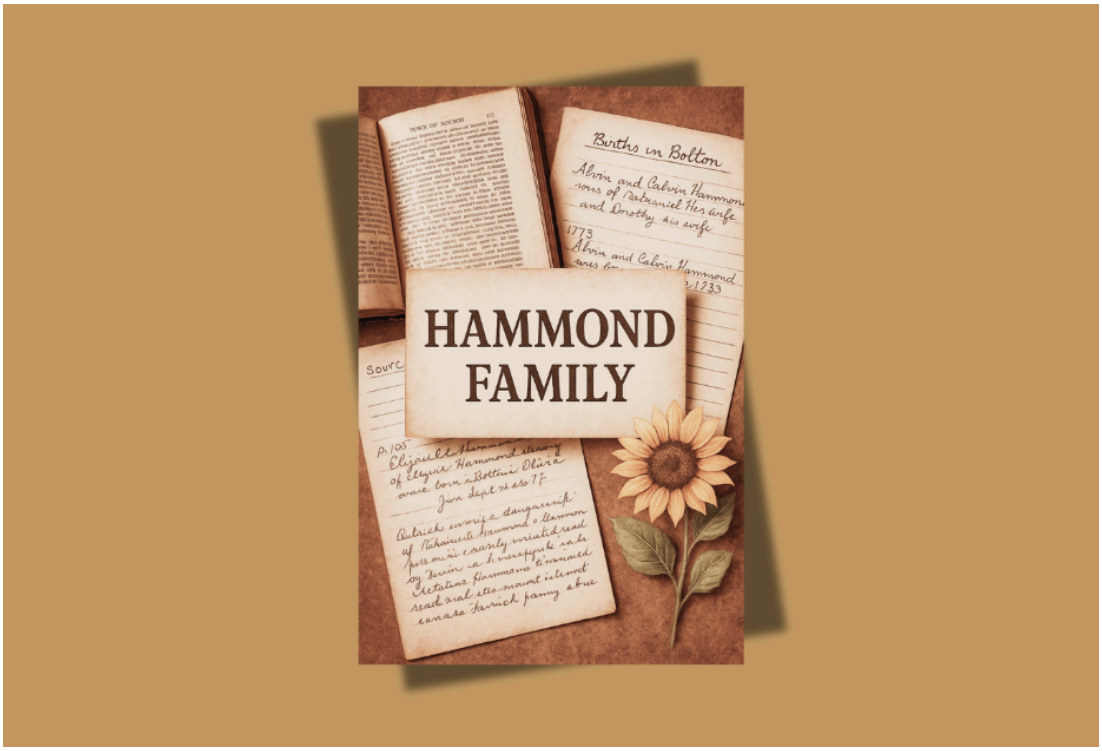
Douglas Luke Hutchinson
born May 15, 1968

Anton Hutchinson

Jane Christina Hutchinson
born March 16, 1966

Questionable Children

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 12, 2026
Hammond
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/12/questionable-children/



One of the challenges of genealogy is deciding what to do with information that has been copied from tree to tree for decades — especially when the evidence begins to conflict.

In the case of my 2nd great-grandfather, Richmond F. Hammond, I'm beginning to question whether I have the correct family structure attached to him. Like many online trees, my database has long included nine children for Richmond Hammond. However, the first three children raise significant questions.

The three oldest children commonly attached to Richmond F. Hammond are:

- William R. R. Hammond, born 1 January 1864
- Homer L. Hammond, born 25 July 1865
- Judson F. E. Hammond, born 15 April 1866

So where did these names and birth dates originate?

In my case — and likely in many other trees — the information came from the book *History and Genealogies of the Hammond Families in America* by Frederick Stam Hammond, published in 1902. Richmond F. Hammond's family appears as family #3327 beginning on page 519, with the children listed on page 520.

At first glance, the list seems straightforward. However, comparing the dates against other records creates several problems.

Richmond F. Hammond married Sarah Ellen Ralston on 1 January 1867. Records consistently indicate Sarah was born on 11 May 1848, meaning she was only 18 years old at the time of her marriage. If Sarah was the mother of the three older children, she would have been approximately:

- 15 years old at William's birth in January 1864
- 17 years old at Homer's birth in July 1865
- and still unmarried at the time of all three births

While young marriages and premarital births certainly occurred, the larger issue is Richmond's Civil War service.

Richmond served in the Union Army during the American Civil War and was captured in August 1864. He was imprisoned at Andersonville Prison and later at Florence Stockade until his release in May 1865.

That timeline creates a major problem for Homer Hammond's reported birth date of 25 July 1865.

A child born in late July 1865 would likely have been conceived in approximately October 1864 — at a time when Richmond was imprisoned hundreds of miles from home. While Richmond may have been home on leave early enough to father William Hammond, it appears highly unlikely that he fathered Homer Hammond if the reported dates are accurate.

Judson's reported birth in April 1866 creates a similarly compressed timeline given Richmond's release from prison in May 1865.

At this point, I have only one known source for these three children: the 1902 Hammond genealogy. I currently have no census records, probate records, Bible records, death records, or other contemporary sources that clearly place William, Homer, or Judson in Richmond F. Hammond's household.

Because the known timeline conflicts with Richmond's imprisonment — and because the evidence currently rests on a single compiled genealogy written decades later — I have decided to disconnect these three children from Richmond F. Hammond in my tree pending further evidence.

That does not necessarily mean the children never existed, nor does it prove they were unrelated to Richmond or Sarah. It simply means that, at present, I do not believe the available evidence is strong enough to confidently place them in the family.

Sometimes genealogy research is not about adding names to a tree. Sometimes it is about recognizing when the evidence no longer supports what has been there all along.

Comparing Infographics

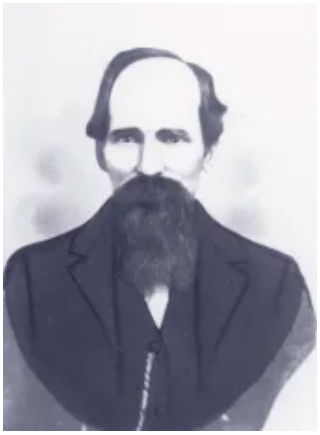
By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 13, 2026
Artificial Intelligence
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/13/comparing-infographics/

Have you seen the news that MyHeritage has introduced a new feature: Family Infographics? After seeing the announcement and reading Randy Seaver's post about it, I decided to try it for myself.

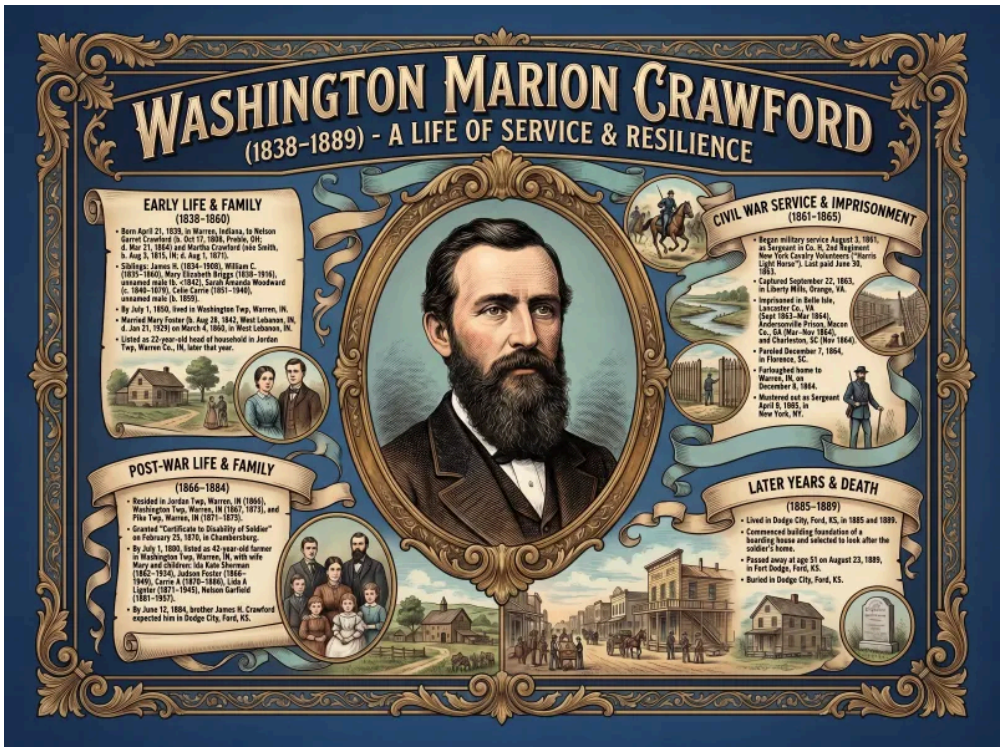
For my first experiment, I created an infographic for my 2nd great-grandfather, Washington Marion Crawford. Although I already had information about him in my family tree, I did not have any photos attached to his profile. When I first attempted to generate the infographic, it failed. However, after uploading the only photograph I have of him, the infographic was successfully created.

One thing immediately stood out: the tool did not use the original photograph directly. Instead, it generated an AI-enhanced version of the image.

Original Photo



Infographic


WASHINGTON MARION CRAWFORD
(1838–1889) - A LIFE OF SERVICE & RESILIENCE
EARLY LIFE & FAMILY
(1838–1860)
• Born April 21, 1839, in Warren, Indiana, to Nelson Garret Crawford (b. Oct 17, 1808, Preble, OH; d. Mar 21, 1854) and Martha Crawford (née Smith, b. Aug 3, 1815, IN; d. Aug 1, 1871).
• Siblings: James H. (1834–1908), William C. (1835–1860), Mary Elizabeth Briggs (1838–1916), unnamed male (b. <1842), Sarah Amanda Woodward (c. 1840–1879), Celia Carrie (1851–1940), unnamed male (b. 1859).
• By July 1, 1850, lived in Washington Twp, Warren, IN.
• Married Mary Foster (b. Aug 28, 1842, West Lebanon, IN, d. Jan 21, 1929) on March 4, 1860, in West Lebanon, IN.
• Listed as 22-year-old head of household in Jordan Twp, Warren Co., IN, later that year.
CIVIL WAR SERVICE & IMPRISONMENT
(1861–1865)
• Began military service August 3, 1861, as Sergeant in Co. H, 2nd Regiment New York Cavalry Volunteers ("Harris Light Horse"). Last paid June 30, 1863.
• Captured September 22, 1863, in Liberty Mills, Orange, VA.
• Imprisoned in Belle Isle, Lancaster Co., VA (Sept 1863–Mar 1864), Andersonville Prison, Macon Co., GA (Mar–Nov 1864), and Charleston, SC (Nov 1864).
• Paroled December 7, 1864, in Florence, SC.
• Furloughed home to Warren, IN, on December 8, 1864.
• Mustered out as Sergeant April 8, 1865, in New York, NY.
POST-WAR LIFE & FAMILY
(1866–1884)
• Resided in Jordan Twp, Warren, IN (1866), Washington Twp, Warren, IN (1867, 1873), and Pike Twp, Warren, IN (1871–1873).
• Granted "Certificate to Disability of Soldier" on February 25, 1870, in Chambersburg.
• By July 1, 1880, listed as 42-year-old farmer in Washington Twp, Warren, IN, with wife Mary and children: Ida Kate Sherman (1862–1934), Judson Foster (1866–1949), Carrie A (1870–1886), Lida A Ligster (1871–1945), Nelson Garfield (1881–1957).
• By June 12, 1884, brother James H. Crawford expected him in Dodge City, Ford, KS.
LATER YEARS & DEATH
(1885–1889)
• Lived in Dodge City, Ford, KS, in 1885 and 1889.
• Commenced building foundation of a boarding house and selected to look after the soldier's home.
• Passed away at age 51 on August 23, 1889, in Fort Dodge, Ford, KS.
• Buried in Dodge City, Ford, KS.

For my second experiment, I chose my grandmother. Again, I had to upload at least one photo before the infographic could be created. I selected a picture from my grandparents' 50th anniversary celebration and asked MyHeritage to create a "scrapbook" style infographic.

As with the first example, the AI modified the original image rather than using it as-is.

Original photo

Infographic

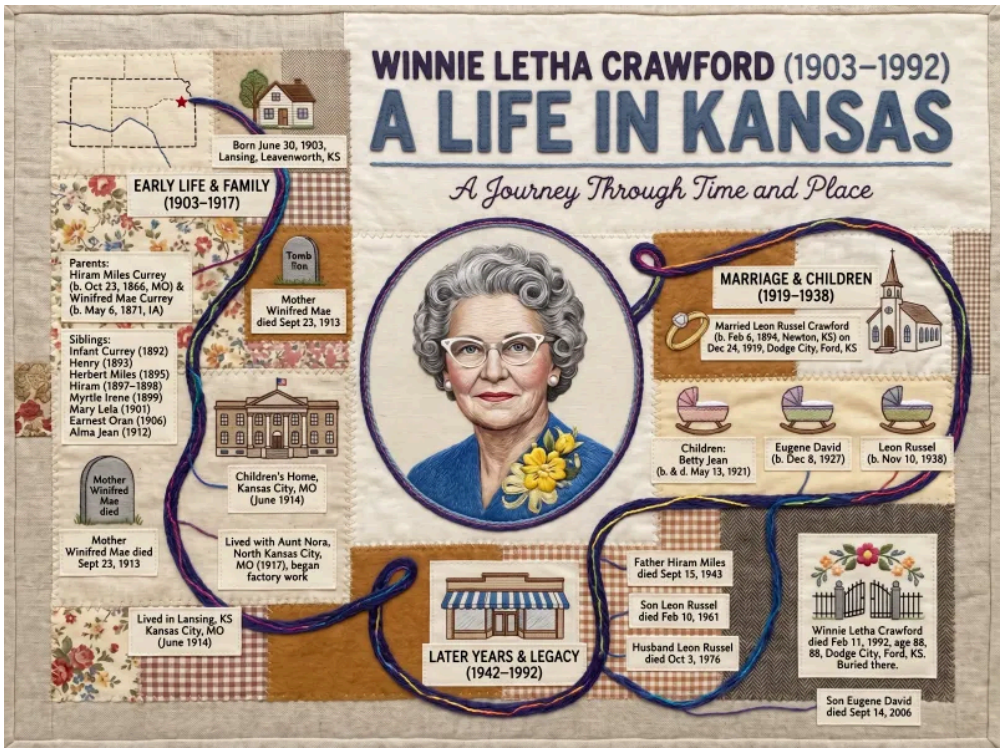
WINNIE LETHA CRAWFORD (1903–1992)
A Life in Kansas
Beloved Wife, Mother, and Kansan
EARLY LIFE & FAMILY (1903–1917)
Born: June 30, 1903
Father: Hiram Miles Currey (b. Oct 23, 1866, MO)
Mother: Winifred Mae Currey (b. May 6, 1871, IA)
Lansing, Leavenworth, Kansas
Children's Home, Kansas City, MO (1914)
Mother Winifred Mae passed away: Sept 23, 1913
Lived with Aunt Nora, North Kansas City, MO (1917), began factory work
MARRIAGE & CHILDREN (1919–1938)
Married: Leon Russel Crawford (b. Feb 6, 1894, Newton, KS) on Dec 24, 1919, in Dodge City, Ford, KS
Dodge City in the 1920s
Betty Joan Crawford (b. & d. May 13, 1921)
Eugene David Crawford (b. Dec 8, 1927)
Leon Russel Crawford (b. Nov 10, 1938)
LATER YEARS & LEGACY (1942–1992)
Father Hiram Miles died: Sept 15, 1943
Son Leon Russel passed away: Feb 10, 1961
Husband Leon Russel Crawford died: Oct 3, 1976
Eckles Department Store, Dodge City, KS
Winnie Letha Crawford passed away: Feb 11, 1992, age 88, Dodge City, Ford, KS. Buried there.
Son Eugene David Crawford died: Sept 14, 2006

Curious how the feature would handle multiple photos, I uploaded several additional images, including:

- her wedding portrait,
- a photo of her with two of her sisters, and
- a family picture from around 1950.

This time, I selected the “quilt” style infographic.

Infographic


WINNIE LETHA CRAWFORD (1903–1992)
A LIFE IN KANSAS
A Journey Through Time and Place
Born June 30, 1903, Lansing, Leavenworth, KS
EARLY LIFE & FAMILY (1903–1917)
Parents: Hiram Miles Currey (b. Oct 23, 1866, MO) & Winifred Mae Currey (b. May 6, 1871, IA)
Siblings: Infant Currey (1892) Henry (1893) Herbert Miles (1895) Hiram (1897–1898) Myrtle Irene (1899) Mary Lela (1901) Earnest Oran (1906) Alma Jean (1912)
Tomb Ston
Mother Winifred Mae died Sept 23, 1913
Children's Home, Kansas City, MO (June 1914)
Mother Winifred Mae died
Mother Winifred Mae died Sept 23, 1913
Lived with Aunt Nora, North Kansas City, MO (1917), began factory work
Lived in Lansing, KS Kansas City, MO (June 1914)
MARRIAGE & CHILDREN (1919–1938)
Married Leon Russel Crawford (b. Feb 6, 1894, Newton, KS) on Dec 24, 1919, Dodge City, Ford, KS
Children: Betty Jean (b. & d. May 13, 1921)
Eugene David (b. Dec 8, 1927)
Leon Russel (b. Nov 10, 1938)
LATER YEARS & LEGACY (1942–1992)
Father Hiram Miles died Sept 15, 1943
Son Leon Russel died Feb 10, 1961
Husband Leon Russel died Oct 3, 1976
Winnie Letha Crawford died Feb 11, 1992, age 88, 88, Dodge City, Ford, KS. Buried there.
Son Eugene David died Sept 14, 2006

Since I have also been experimenting with Google’s NotebookLM to create infographics, I decided to compare the results.

For this test, I generated a narrative report for my grandmother using RootsMagic. I inserted three photos into the report: her wedding photo, the family photo, and the anniversary picture. After uploading the PDF to NotebookLM, I selected “Infographic” and entered the custom prompt:

"Use a quilt block style."

Infographic

A Life Pieced Together: The Journey of Winnie Letha Currey (1903–1992)
Winnie Letha Currey was a lifelong Kansan whose journey spanned 88 years. After a transient childhood that included time in a children's home, she settled in Dodge City, where she built a long-term marriage, raised a family, and became a pillar of local fraternal organizations.
Foundations and Family Building (1903–1938)
Kansas Beginnings
1903
Born June 30, 1903, in Lansing; she survived a transient childhood including time in a Missouri children's home.
A Christmas Wedding
1919
On December 24, 1919, she married Leon Russel Crawford, a WWI veteran, in Dodge City.
Establishing a Home
1921–1938
Between 1921 and 1938, she raised two sons, Engene and Leon Jr., in Dodge City.
Service, Work, and Legacy (1939–1992)
50 Years of Dedication
Awarded a 50-year pin for her membership in the St. Bernard Chapter of the Eastern Star.
Professional Contribution
1953–1958
Served the community through her employment at Eckies Department Store from 1953 to 1958.
A Lasting Legacy
1992
Passed away in 1992 at age 88, having spent over 70 years as a Dodge City resident.
NotebookLM

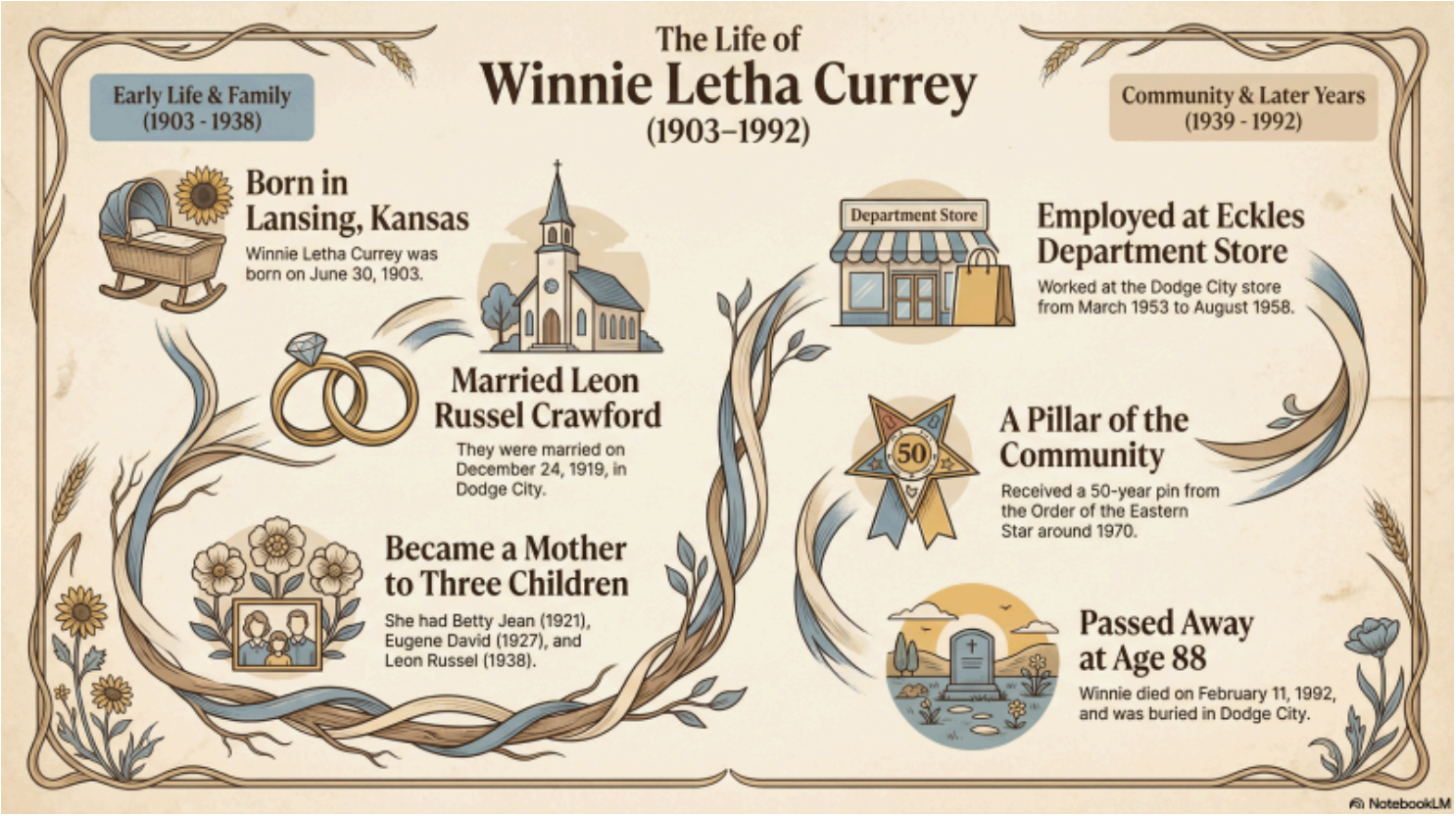
I also asked NotebookLM to generate an infographic from the same source material without using a custom prompt.

Infographic

A Lifetime in Dodge City: The Journey of Winnie Letha Currey (1903–1992)
1903: FOUNDATIONS & FAMILY BUILDING
Born June 30, 1903.
Born in Lansing, Kansas, before moving to Dodge City as a young adult.
1919: A CHRISTMAS EVE WEDDING
Married Leon Russel Crawford, a WWI veteran, in a ceremony at her brother's home.
RAISING A FAMILY IN DODGE CITY
Betty Jean: Born May 13, 1921. Lived for approximately one hour.
Eugene David: Born Dec 8, 1927. Granted Power of Attorney for Winnie in 1976.
Leon Russel II: Born Nov 10, 1938. Outstanding student and member of National Thespian Society.
CAREER, COMMUNITY, AND LONGEVITY (1939–1992)
1970
50 Years of Devoted Service
Awarded a 50-year pin from the Order of the Eastern Star in 1970.
ECKLES DEPARTMENT STORE
Career at Eckles Department Store
Served the Dodge City community as an employee from 1953 to 1958.
1992: A LIFE SPANNING 88 YEARS
Passed away on February 11, 1992, and was buried at Maple Grove Cemetery.
NotebookLM

The timeline-style infographic did a good job summarizing the report, but I was not especially fond of the color palette. Looking back through some earlier prompts, I found an infographic with a more muted appearance that I preferred.

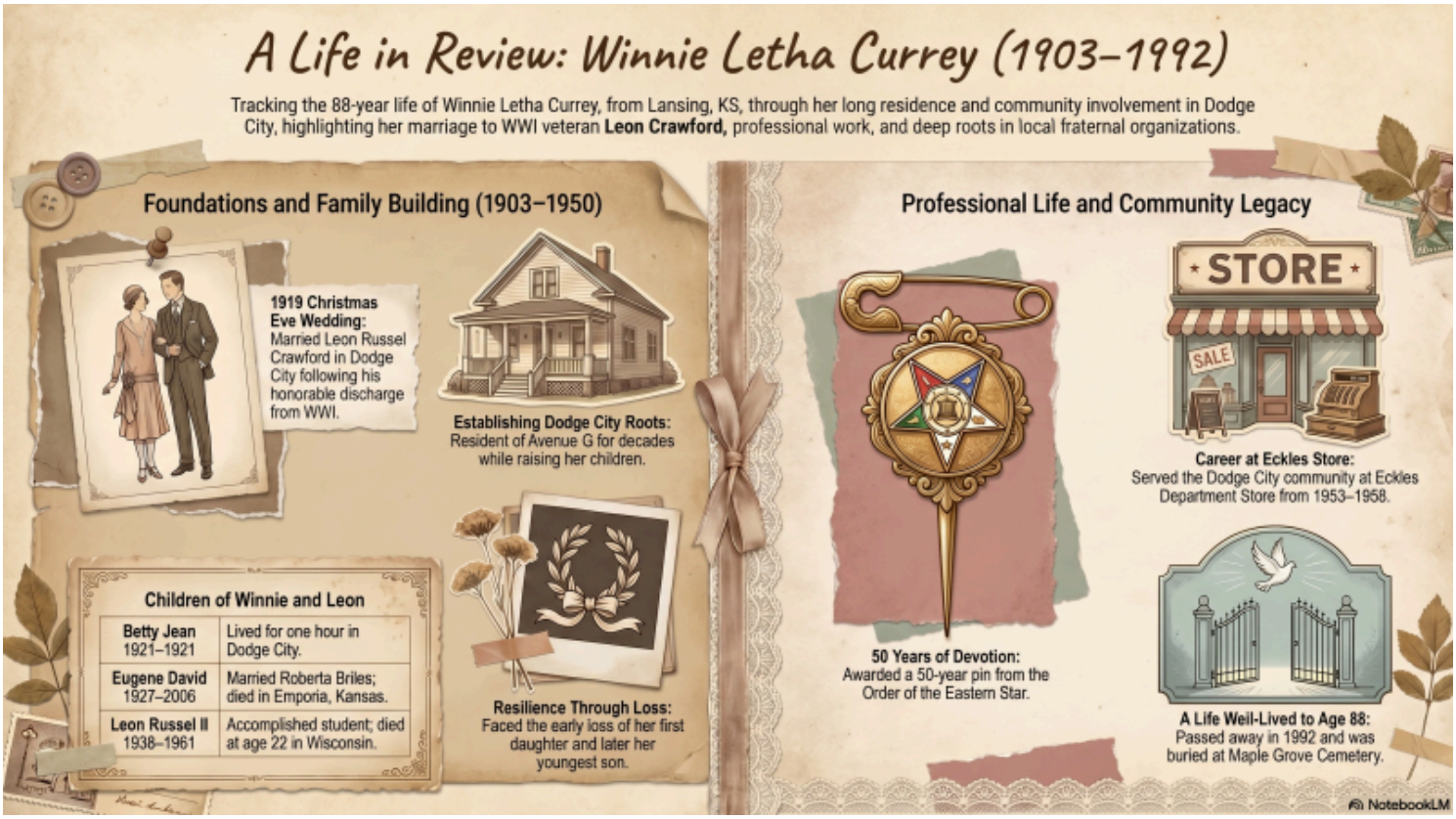
Infographic


The Life of
Winnie Letha Currey
(1903–1992)
Early Life & Family
(1903 - 1938)
Community & Later Years
(1939 - 1992)
Born in Lansing, Kansas
Winnie Letha Currey was born on June 30, 1903.
Married Leon Russel Crawford
They were married on December 24, 1919, in Dodge City.
Became a Mother to Three Children
She had Betty Jean (1921), Eugene David (1927), and Leon Russel (1938).
Department Store
Employed at Eckles Department Store
Worked at the Dodge City store from March 1953 to August 1958.
50
A Pillar of the Community
Received a 50-year pin from the Order of the Eastern Star around 1970.
Passed Away at Age 88
Winnie died on February 11, 1992, and was buried in Dodge City.
NotebookLM

Using that as inspiration, I regenerated the infographic with a new prompt:

> “Use a scrapbook style with muted colors.”

Infographic


A Life in Review: Winnie Letha Currey (1903–1992)
Tracking the 88-year life of Winnie Letha Currey, from Lansing, KS, through her long residence and community involvement in Dodge City, highlighting her marriage to WWI veteran Leon Crawford, professional work, and deep roots in local fraternal organizations.
Foundations and Family Building (1903–1950)
1919 Christmas Eve Wedding: Married Leon Russel Crawford in Dodge City following his honorable discharge from WWI.
Establishing Dodge City Roots: Resident of Avenue G for decades while raising her children.
Children of Winnie and Leon
Betty Jean 1921–1921 | Lived for one hour in Dodge City.
Eugene David 1927–2006 | Married Roberta Briles; died in Emporia, Kansas.
Leon Russel II 1938–1961 | Accomplished student; died at age 22 in Wisconsin.
Resilience Through Loss: Faced the early loss of her first daughter and later her youngest son.
Professional Life and Community Legacy
50 Years of Devotion: Awarded a 50-year pin from the Order of the Eastern Star.
STORE
SALE
Career at Eckles Store: Served the Dodge City community at Eckles Department Store from 1953–1958.
A Life Well-Lived to Age 88: Passed away in 1992 and was buried at Maple Grove Cemetery.
NotebookLM

After experimenting with both tools, here are my initial impressions:

- MyHeritage Family Infographics requires at least one uploaded image.
- MyHeritage appears to modify uploaded photos rather than using the originals directly.
- MyHeritage offers a variety of visual styles for infographic generation.
- NotebookLM can create very similar infographic layouts from narrative reports.
- Simple prompt changes in NotebookLM can significantly alter the visual output.
- NotebookLM provides more flexibility for experimenting with styles and colors.

Because I do not currently store many photos in my MyHeritage tree — and because I am already using NotebookLM extensively in my workflow — I will probably continue using NotebookLM to create genealogy infographics.

That said, MyHeritage's Family Infographics feature is an interesting addition and may appeal to users who already keep their photos and family data within the MyHeritage ecosystem.

Military Discharge Paper at Courthouse

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 14, 2026
Crawford,World War I
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/14/military-discharge-paper-at-courthouse/

When researching family history, some of the most valuable records can be found in unexpected places. In Kansas, military veterans often filed copies of their discharge papers with the county Register of Deeds. These records provided a safe local copy of their military service information and could later be used to help prove eligibility for veterans' benefits.

Today, access to many of these records is restricted for privacy reasons. However, when I first began researching my family history years ago, these records were still accessible to researchers. Thanks to that earlier access, I was able to view the discharge records for both my father, who served during World War II, and my grandfather, Leon Crawford, who served during World War I.

Unfortunately, this was long before smartphones and digital cameras made it easy to capture images at the courthouse. Instead of photographs, I came home with handwritten notes copied from the original record book. While not as visually striking as the original document, those notes preserved important details about my grandfather's service — including his enlistment information, physical description, military assignments, and the campaigns in which he served during the war.

Below is the transcription of the notes I made from Leon Crawford's recorded honorable discharge in Ford County, Kansas.

> Miscellaneous Book I p. 285
> Register of Deeds
> Ford County Government Center
> Dodge City Kansas
>
> Honorable Discharge
>
> Leon Crawford #153713 Wagoner
>
> born Newton Kansas
> enlisted age 21 3/12 years of age
> Switchman (occupation)
> blue eyes, lt brown hair, ruddy complexion
> 5′ 9¼”
>
> discharged 28 March 1919
>
> enlisted 26 April 1917 at Dodge City
> appt. Wagoner 1 Mar 1919

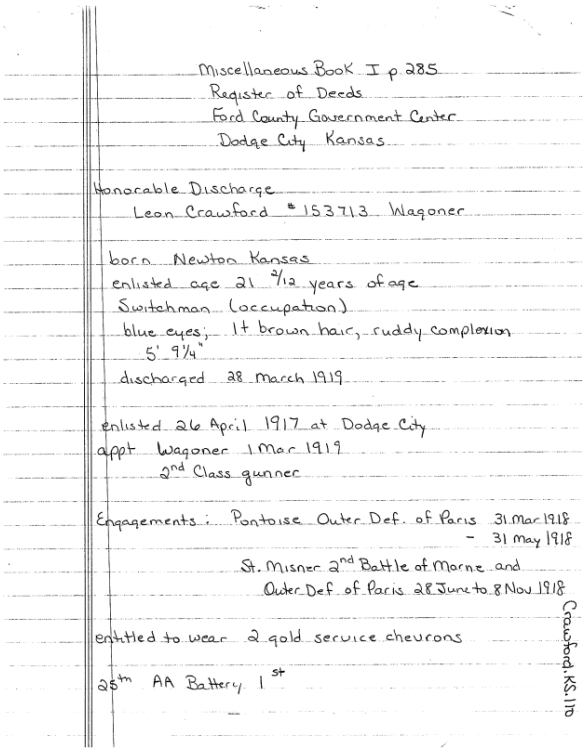
2nd Class gunner

Engagements: Pontoise Outer Def. of Paris 31 Mar 1918 – 31 May 1918

St. Misner [possibly St. Mihiel] 2nd Battle of Marne and Outer Def. of Paris 28 June to 8 Nov 1918

entitled to wear 2 gold service chevrons

25th AA Battery, 1st



Miscellaneous Book I p 285
Register of Deeds
Ford County Government Center
Dodge City Kansas

Honorable Discharge
Leon Crawford # 153713 Wagoner

born Newton Kansas
enlisted age 21 9/12 years of age
Switchman (occupation)
blue eyes; lt brown hair, ruddy complexion
5' 9¼"
discharged 28 March 1919

enlisted 26 April 1917 at Dodge City
appt Wagoner 1 Mar 1919
2nd Class gunner

Engagements: Pontoise Outer Def. of Paris 31 Mar 1918 – 31 May 1918
St. Misner 2nd Battle of Marne and Outer Def. of Paris 28 June to 8 Nov 1918

entitled to wear 2 gold service chevrons

25th AA Battery 1st

Crawford.KS.1to

Though I wish I had photographed the original record, I'm thankful that I took careful notes all those years ago. Those handwritten notes preserved details about my grandfather's World War I service that might otherwise have been lost to time. They also serve as a reminder that valuable genealogical discoveries don't always come from online databases — sometimes they come from courthouse books, handwritten notes, and the research trips we made long before digital photography and cloud storage existed.

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 15, 2026
Crawford,Dodge City
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/15/friday-find-116/

Have you ever sat in front of a microfilm reader, hand on the crank, slowly scrolling through page after page of newspapers in hopes of finding a single mention of your family? Before digitized newspapers and searchable databases, that was simply part of genealogy research. Hours could be spent turning that crank, scanning headlines and columns, hoping to spot a familiar name.

Today, many of us are spoiled by the convenience of online newspapers. A quick search can locate an obituary or article in seconds. But when I first began researching my family history, newspapers were not digitized. If I wanted to find something, I had to do it the old-fashioned way — one frame of microfilm at a time.

Today's "Friday Find" is one of the handwritten notes I made during those hours at the microfilm reader. The note preserves a brief death notice for Lida Anita Lighter, daughter of Washington Marion Crawford and Mary (Foster) Crawford. Lida was my great-grandaunt and had lived in Dodge City since 1884.

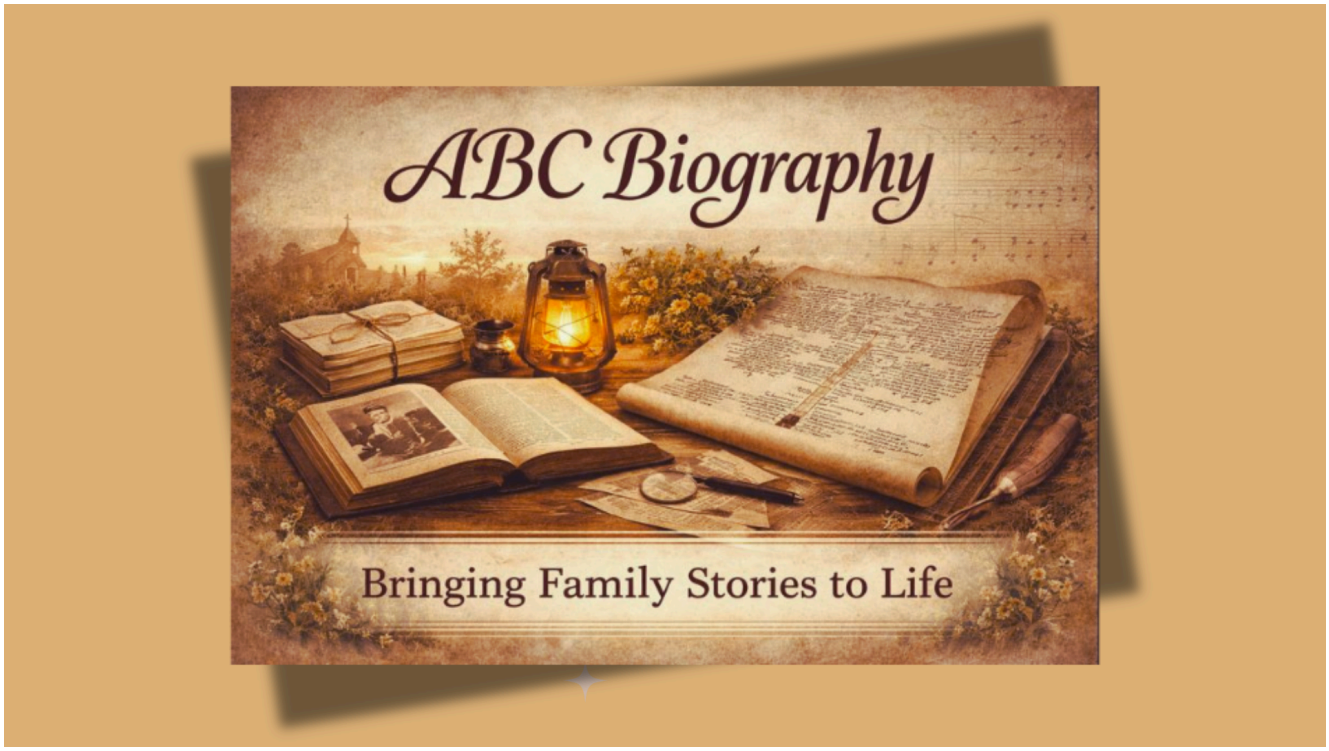
I found this notice in the *Dodge City Journal*, 29 December 1945, page 7. While the notice is short, it still provides valuable details, including her age, residence, and the names of two brothers.

Below is the transcription of that notice.

> *Deaths*
>
> "Lida Anita Lighter, 74, resident of Dodge City since 1884, sister of J. F. Crawford and Nelson Crawford died Dec. 13."

ABC Biography – Hiram M. Currey

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 16, 2026
Currey,Kansas
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/16/abc-biography-hiram-m-currey/



One of the benefits of my ABC Biography project is that it encourages me to take the dry facts from a narrative report and turn them into a story about a real person's life.

Today's biography features **Hiram M. Currey (1835–1901)**, my 3rd great-grandfather. Hiram spent much of his life farming in Leavenworth County, Kansas, after beginning his adult life during the turbulent years leading up to the Civil War. His story includes frontier farming, land purchases, militia service during the Civil War era, legal disputes involving family land, and the challenges of raising a large family in nineteenth-century Kansas.

Like many of these ABC Biography projects, the narrative report provides the framework, but transforming those facts into a readable biography helps me better understand the person behind the dates and places. What was it like to establish a farm in early Kansas? How did national events such as the Civil War and railroad expansion affect everyday families like the Curreys?

Below is the AI-assisted draft biography created from my research notes and source material for Hiram M. Currey.

Hiram M. Currey (1835–1901)

A Kansas Farmer with Deep Midwestern Roots

Hiram M. Currey was born on 13 August 1835 in Peoria, Peoria County, Illinois. He is believed to have been the son of Hiram M. Currey, a lawyer in Peoria, and his wife, Rachel Harris Currey.

Though born in Illinois, Hiram's early years appear to have involved some movement, something not unusual for American families in the decades before the Civil War. By 1850, fifteen-year-old Hiram was living in Carroll County, Indiana, where he was listed as a farmer in the household of Jane Currey.

This was an era when the American frontier was steadily pushing westward. Illinois had only been a state for seventeen years when Hiram was born, and families frequently relocated in search of land, opportunity, and a better future.

Marriage and the Beginning of a Family

On 3 August 1856, Hiram married Angelina Jane Burke in Weston, Platte County, Missouri.

Angelina had Kentucky roots, and together they began building a family during a period when Kansas was still very much a developing frontier region.

By 1860, the young couple was living in Kickapoo Township, Leavenworth County, Kansas. Hiram, just twenty-four years old, was working as a farmer. His wife Angelina, age twenty-three, and their infant daughter Sarah were in the household with him.

Kansas had only entered the Union as a state in 1861, meaning Hiram and Angelina were among the early settlers helping establish its agricultural communities.

Establishing Himself in Kansas

Hiram moved quickly to establish himself as a landowner.

In September 1860, he acquired 160 acres in Leavenworth County through a military bounty land warrant originally granted to James Dillard, a veteran of the War of 1812. The land patent, signed during the administration of President James Buchanan, transferred ownership to Hiram as the assignee.

Owning land was central to economic stability in nineteenth-century America. For a young farmer, 160 acres represented not only a livelihood, but a legacy to build upon.

Civil War Era Service

Although there is no indication that Hiram served in the regular Union Army, he did answer Kansas's call during the Civil War.

On 8 October 1864, he was mustered into Company B of the 12th Cavalry Regiment of the Kansas State Militia under Captain Samuel Hollister in Atchison, Kansas. He was discharged less than three weeks later, on 27 October 1864.

This brief period of service aligns with the emergency mobilization of Kansas militia units during Confederate General Sterling Price's 1864 raid into Missouri, when Kansas forces were rapidly organized for defense.

In February 1865, Hiram also registered for the military draft.

Raising a Growing Family

By 1865, Hiram and Angelina's family was expanding quickly. The Kansas state census listed:

- Hiram, age 29
- Angelina, age 28
- Eveline, age 6
- John H., age 4
- Mary, age 1

Five years later, the household included:

- Hiram
- Angelina
- Eveline
- John
- Mary
- Hiram (the younger)
- Quincy

By 1880, the Currey household was full:

- John Henry Currey (1861–1898)
- Sarah Evelina Currey (1859–1884)
- Mary Caroline Currey (1864–1945)
- Hiram Miles Currey (1866–1943)
- William Quincy Currey (1868–1952)
- James Gilbert Currey (1871–1942)
- Elizabeth Jane Currey (1874–1945)
- Dora Ann Currey (1876–1968)

Two younger children would also complete the family:

- Marion Franklin Currey (1881–1903)
- Frank Currey (1884–1885)

Like many nineteenth-century families, the Curreys experienced both joy and heartbreak. Infant mortality remained common, and Frank died at only a few months old.

Land, Business, and Legal Troubles

Life as a nineteenth-century farmer was rarely simple.

In 1871, Hiram and Angelina sold the 160-acre tract he had acquired years earlier.

The family also became involved in a complicated series of Missouri court actions in the mid-1870s involving Angelina's Burke relatives and disputed land in Platte County, Missouri. Hiram and Angelina, alongside Guilford and Sarah Hornbuckle, petitioned for partition of family land and participated in extended litigation involving John M. Burke and Milton E. Burke.

These records suggest that Angelina retained family property interests in Missouri, and that resolving inheritance or trust matters required lengthy legal action.

Later financial dealings included:

- sale of railroad right-of-way land in 1887
- sale of coal and mineral rights in 1889
- foreclosure proceedings in 1893

These transactions reflect changing rural economies in Kansas, where railroads, coal extraction, and debt increasingly shaped farm life.

The Final Years

By 1895, Hiram and Angelina were still farming in Delaware Township, Leavenworth County, with younger children Dora and Marion at home, along with granddaughter Bessie Morris.

The 1900 census shows the same basic household, with Hiram and Angelina still surrounded by family.

After decades of farming and raising a large family, Hiram's life came to an end on 2 March 1901 in Lansing, Leavenworth County, Kansas. He was sixty-five years old.

A newspaper announcement reported:

Hiram Curry died at his home just south of Lansing yesterday morning of heart disease. The funeral will be held from the residence tomorrow afternoon at one o'clock. Interment at Mt. Muncie cemetery.

The notice continued:

Hiram Curry was born in Illinois in 1835 and came to Kansas many years ago. He was a highly respected farmer and had a host of friends.

He was buried at Mount Muncie Cemetery.

His Children

Hiram and Angelina's children were:

Sarah Evelina Currey (31 January 1859 – 4 December 1884)
Married Santford D. Morris on 25 September 1879 in Leavenworth County, Kansas.

John Henry Currey (11 March 1861 – 14 April 1898)
Married Mary O'Rourke on 1 December 1890 in Lansing, Kansas.

Mary Caroline Currey (8 May 1864 – 16 May 1945)
Married John Henry Spears on 12 February 1886 in Leavenworth County, Kansas.

Hiram Miles Currey (23 October 1866 – 15 September 1943)
Married Winifred Mae Hutchinson on 13 May 1891 in Kansas City, Missouri.

William Quincy Currey (11 December 1868 – 3 March 1952)
Married Jessie A. Myers in 1891; later Frances B. Lorede in 1923.

James Gilbert Currey (10 October 1871 – 18 January 1942)
Married Mary ("Mamie") Ridge in 1895.

Elizabeth Jane Currey (22 May 1874 – 5 June 1945)
Married Robert Rigby in 1894.

Dora Ann Currey (14 October 1876 – 29 April 1968)
Married Charles Lee Marts in 1901.

Marion Franklin Currey (12 April 1881 – 7 July 1903)

Frank Currey (2 November 1884 – 14 February 1885)

Historical Context

Hiram M. Currey's life spanned one of the most transformative periods in American history.

He was born during Andrew Jackson's presidency, before railroads had fully transformed travel and before the telegraph changed communication. As a young man, he witnessed the settlement of the Midwest and the intense struggle over whether Kansas would become a free or slave state.

He built his adult life in Kansas during the frontier era, when land ownership offered opportunity but required determination and relentless labor.

He lived through:

- the Civil War
- Kansas militia mobilization during Price's Raid
- Reconstruction
- rapid railroad expansion
- the rise of industrial coal mining
- enormous agricultural and economic changes in the late nineteenth century

By the time he died in 1901, America was entering a new century. Telephones were appearing, automobiles were beginning to emerge, and the frontier generation was giving way to the modern age.

Hiram's story reflects the experience of many nineteenth-century Americans: migration, hard work, family, uncertainty, resilience, and perseverance.

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 17, 2026
SaturdayNightGenealogyFun
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/17/saturday-night-genealogy-fun-199/

Calling all Genea-Musings Fans:

It's Saturday Night again –

time for some more Genealogy Fun!!

Here is your assignment if you choose to play along (cue the Mission Impossible music, please!):

1) Determine where your ancestral families were in May 1876 — 150 years ago.

2) List them, their family members, their birth years, and their residence location (as close as possible).

GREAT GREAT GRANDPARENTS

Washington Marion Crawford and his wife Mary (Foster) Crawford were likely living in Warren County, Indiana in 1876. His pension record places him in Washington Township, Warren County in 1873 and the family is found there in 1880.Washington's brother, James, migrated from Warren County, Indiana to Dodge City, Kansas in 1878. Washington followed his brother by moving his family to Dodge City in 1884. In 1876, Washington and Mary's household owuld have included daughter Ida, born in 1862; son, Judson bornin 1866, daughter Carrie born in 1870 and daughter Lida, born in 1871.

Richmond Fisk Hammond and his wife Sarah (Ralston) Hammond were living in Knox county, Illinois in 1875 according to tax records. By 1880m the family was living in Union Township, Hardin County, Iowa. The family included daughter, Estella orn 1868, son Forest born 1868, daughter Nellie born 1871, and daughter Josie born 1874.

Hiram M. Currey and wife Angelina Jane (Burke) Currey were living in Kickapoo, Leavenworth County, Kansas in 1875. By 1880, the family had moved to Delaware township, Leavenworth county. Children in the household in 1876 included Sarah Evelina born 1859, John Henry borh 1861, Mary Caroline born 1864, HIram Mile born 1866, William Quency born 1868, Jame Gilbert born 1871, Elizabeth Jane born 1874 and Dora Ann born 1876.

Albert Hutchinson and his wife Julia (Harding) Hutchinson were living in Douglas Township, Mitchell County, Iowa in 1880. SInce they sold Bremer county, Iowa land in 1871, they likely moved to Mitchell county shortly after that. The 1876 household would have included Gerturde, born 1860; Albert G., born 1862; William Henry, born 1865; Frederick born 1867; Cary born 1869; Winifred May, born 1871; Elnora born 1874 and Guy Thomsas born 1876.

Noah Washington Briles and Sarah Jane (Thompson) Briles were linving in Neosho Township, Coffey County, Kansas in 1875. Also living in the 1876 household were Ida Angelina born 1868 and Edward Grant born 1869.

James Marshall Richetts and Rachel Elmeda (Christy) Ricketts wre living in in 1876. In 1876, the household included Frances Artlissa,born 1868; Hulda May, born 1870; Annabelle, born 1871; Daisy Pearl born 1873 and Manford Milton born 1875.

George Mentzer and Emiline (Minnick) Mentzer were living in Center Township, Woodson County, Kansas in 1875. Their household included Charles, born 1869; John Frederick, born 1871; Susan May, born 1873, and Henry Arnold born 1874.

Thurston Kennedy Wells and Salome (Crandall) Wells were living in Liberty Township, Woodson County, Kansas. Thurston's two sons by his first wife, Sarah Hall, were adults in 1876 and living in Woodson County, Kansas. The 1876 household of Thurston and Salome would have included two daughters, Anna, born 1868 andeEttie Adell, born 1873.

Third Great Grandparents – Living in 1876

Zebulon Foster was living in Warren County, Indiana in 1876. Besides Mary (Foster) Crawford, the following children were living in 1876: Edward Foster, born 1833; Rachel (Foster) Crider, born 1837; Eliza (Foster) Bell, born 1840, William F. Foster, born 1846 and Hariet (Foster) Fleming, born 1848.

Horatio Hammond was living in Knox county, Illinois in 1876. Besides Richmond Fisk Hammond, the following children were living in 1876 Amelia Emily 9Hammond) Hadley, born1826; Juliett (Hammond) Simms, born 1872; George M. Hammond, born 1829; Rancis N. Hammond, born 1830; Jehiel Hammond, born 1832; Lucius Hammond, born 1833; and Cornelius Hammond, born 1836.

James Barr Ralson and Nany Jane (McCormick) Ralston were living in Grudy County, Iowa in 1876. Besides Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond, their children living in 1876 included Amanda (Ralston) Simkins, born 1838; Matilda Ralston, born 1840; James McCormic Ralston, born 1845; David Franklin Ralston, born 1847, Ellis Simpkins Ralston, born 1851; Margaret (Ralston) Barnes, born 1854 and Alicia Melinda (Ralston) Lighter, born 1857.

Alexander Briles was living in Coffey County, Kansas in 1876. Besides Noah Washington Briles, Alexander had the following living children in 1876: Sarah (Briles) Ruggles, b 1841; John F. Briles, born 1843; Louise Jane (Briles) Mentzer, b 1846; Robert Alexander Briles, born 1849; Harison W. Briles, born 1852, Zebadee Rush Briles, born 1855, Nany (Briles) Allen, born 1856 and Benjamin R. Briles, born 1860

William Taylor Thompson and Polly Ann (Evans) Thompson were living in Wapello county, Iowa in 1876. Besides Sarah Jane (Thompson) Briles, other children living in 1876 included John Evans, born 1845, William F., born 1848, Martha E (Thompson) Ingersoll, born 1850, Julia Thompson, born 1853 and Amamda Ellen (Thompson) Goudy, born 1854; Arcena M. (Thompson) Harper), born 1858; Polly Ann (Thompson) Ricketts born 1860; and Clara Belle (Thompson) Goudy.

John Lewis Ricketts and Orilda Matilda Reed (Ricketts) were living in Clinton County, Indiana in 1876. Besides James Marshall Ricketts, their living children included Priscilla Jane (Ricketts) Louks b1849; Mary Ann (Ricketts) BOnd, born 1851; William Lewis Ricketts born 1855; John Edward Ricketts, born 1857, Joseph Harvey Ricketts, born 1861 and Clemuel W. Ricketts, born 1863.

Samuel Christy was living in Jefferson Township, Tipton county, Indiana in 1876. Besides Rachel Christy Ricketts, his other children livin gin 1876 included Ebenezer Christy, born 1853; Samuel Milton Christy, born 1855; Lydia Alice (Christy) Goff, born 1858 and Esther (Christy) Rector, born 1860.

John Minnick was living in Kewanee, Henry county, Illinois in the 1870s. In addition to Emiline Minnick Mentzer, his children living in 1876 included Wilson J. Minnic, born 1844; Ruhanah Minnick, born 8147, Barbara Ellen (Minnick) Frick, born 1849; Mary E. Minnick, born 1851 and Susan Loretta (Minnick_ Halterman, born 1853.

Mary (Kennedy) Wells was a widow living in Chester township, Eaton County, Michigan in 1873. Siblings of Thurston Kennedy Wells who were living in 1876 included Benjamin Franklin Wells, William Wallce Wells, Hannah Anne Perry, Lucinda M. Hall and Nancy Phidila Doolittle all living in Michigan in 1876.

Fifty-Two Years of Shared Paths

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 18, 2026
Philbrick
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/18/fifty-two/

On May 18, Michael and I will celebrate 52 years of marriage.

As I've reflected on our anniversary over the past few years, I've realized that our story is a bit unusual. Many couples discover that opposites attract—that each brings different strengths, interests, and experiences to a marriage. In our case, we began with an extraordinary amount in common.

We were both confirmed in the Methodist church, grounding our lives in a shared faith.

We both attended Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia (now Emporia State University), where we pursued degrees in physical science education—though I still tend to say I majored in chemistry. Chemistry, in fact, played a major role in bringing us together. We both worked as chemistry lab assistants, spending hours in labs, classrooms, and around campus, building not only our knowledge of science but also a relationship that would last a lifetime.

Then came graduation in May of 1974.

And the very next day—we were married.

That beginning set the tone for much of our lives: moving forward together, often on remarkably similar paths.

Michael began his teaching career as a chemistry and physics teacher at Nemaha Valley High School. I started my career teaching chemistry and physics for USD 380, splitting my time between teaching students from Centralia and Frankfort at Vermilion and teaching freshman earth science at Centralia. After two years, our professional lives converged when I joined Michael at Nemaha Valley, though my classroom assignment shifted to biology.

While Michael pursued graduate coursework and science opportunities, I found myself drawn in a different—but complementary—direction. I earned my master's degree in library science, leading to a career shift in 1985 when I became the school librarian.

Of course, schools were changing rapidly by then.

By 1992, computers had become a much larger part of education, and I added technology coordinator to my responsibilities. My strengths were always on the software side of things, while Mike became my dependable hardware consultant. It seemed fitting: even when our job descriptions evolved, we still found ways to work as a team.

Education shaped much of our married life. We spent decades in the same school system, helping students navigate science, research, technology, and learning.

Then in 2016, we retired—together.

Retirement didn't end our shared interests. It simply redirected them.

These days, instead of solving science problems or troubleshooting school technology, we spend much of our time researching our families. While our genealogical interests focus on different branches, the detective work feels familiar. Once again, we are asking questions, seeking evidence, and piecing together stories.

Looking back, I realize that our marriage has been built not only on love, but also on shared curiosity, mutual support, and the willingness to grow—sometimes in parallel, sometimes in different directions, but always together.

Fifty-two years after saying "I do," I'm grateful that the chemistry still works.

Religious Heritage

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 19, 2026
Uncategorized
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/19/religious-heritage/

Do you track the religion of your ancestors?

Religion is one of those items that often appears on genealogy research checklists, but it isn't a fact I've spent much time actively documenting.

That changed while I was working on the ABC Biography project for my second great-grandmother, **Sarah Ellen (Ralston) Hammond**. As I reviewed her obituary, I noticed that her funeral was held in the Presbyterian church. Evidently, I had overlooked that detail when I first obtained the obituary years ago.

That small discovery solved a childhood mystery.

I remember my grandfather mentioning that *his family* attended the Presbyterian church, but as a child, I could never figure out which side of the family he meant. Now I realize he was referring to his grandmother, Sarah Ellen Ralston Hammond, and likely the Ralston branch of the family.

That discovery made me curious: **what religious affiliations appear throughout my family tree?**

Religion can be more than an interesting family detail—it can also be a valuable genealogy clue. Knowing a family's religious affiliation may help identify where to look for baptisms, marriages, burials, membership rolls, confirmation records, and even migration patterns if families moved with others of the same faith tradition.

Several years ago, many genealogists experimented with colorful "birth charts" showing the places or years of birth for ancestors. I decided to borrow that concept and adapt it to visualize **religious affiliation** instead.

Using a section of my five-generation chart, I assigned colors based on the church denominations I've identified in records, obituaries, family memories, and other sources. While there are still some ancestors whose religious affiliation remains unknown, a clear pattern emerged.

My ancestors were predominantly **Methodist**, with additional branches connected to the **Christian Church**, **Baptist**, **Presbyterian**, and **United Brethren** traditions.

Looking at the chart, it's interesting to see how religious traditions seem to cluster within certain family lines. It also reminds me that details we may have overlooked in old records can become important research clues later. That single note in Sarah's obituary not only answered a family question but also opened the door to thinking about where additional records for these families might be found.

Do you record the religious affiliations of your ancestors? Have you noticed patterns—or found church records—because of those clues?

AI Mentors

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 20, 2026
Artificial Intelligence
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/20/ai-mentors/

Do you use artificial intelligence in your genealogy research? If so, are you figuring it out on your own, or do you have mentors and resources that help you learn?

While much of using AI involves experimentation, I've found it incredibly helpful to learn from others who are exploring the same tools and sharing their successes (and sometimes their missteps).

My favorite AI mentor is Randy Seaver of Genea-Musings. His posts about the workflows he has developed using AI—whether for writing biographies, creating songs, and generating infographics—have been especially useful. Seeing how another genealogist integrates AI into an established research process has helped me think more creatively about my own projects.

Beyond Randy, I regularly turn to several other people and resources as I continue learning how to use AI in my genealogy work:

- **The Family History AI Show** with Steve Little and Mark Thompson
  A great source for practical discussions about AI tools, genealogy workflows, and emerging trends.
- **Genealogy and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Facebook Group**
  A community where genealogists share ideas, ask questions, and experiment with AI-powered approaches.
- **Ancestors and Algorithms: AI for Genealogy Facebook Group**
  Another active community focused specifically on using AI for family history research and storytelling.
- **The Family History Guide by James Tanner – AI blog posts**
  James frequently explores technology's role in genealogy, including AI applications.
- **AI Genealogy Insights by Steve Little**
  Steve consistently provides thoughtful ideas about how AI can enhance genealogy research and productivity.
- **RootsTech sessions on AI**
  RootsTech has become a valuable source for learning about new AI tools and seeing demonstrations of how others are applying them to family history.

When I asked ChatGPT for additional suggestions of genealogy educators and resources exploring AI, it recommended the following:

- **Nicole Dyer / Family Locket**
  Particularly useful for those interested in combining AI with genealogy research methods and analysis.
- **Diahan Southard**
  Especially helpful if your genealogy work involves DNA analysis, since AI tools may increasingly support DNA interpretation workflows.

- **Thomas MacEntee**
  Long known for genealogy technology education, with growing discussion of AI-related tools and workflows.
- **Genealogy creators on YouTube experimenting with AI**
  Sometimes the most practical ideas come from watching how other researchers are actually using these tools in real projects.

And, perhaps most obviously:

- **ChatGPT itself**
  Not just as a writing assistant, but as an interactive mentor for brainstorming, troubleshooting, refining workflows, and experimenting with new ideas.

One of the exciting things about artificial intelligence is how quickly the landscape changes. New tools appear, existing tools improve, and genealogists continue to discover creative ways to apply them. That means the learning never really stops—which may be part of what makes it so much fun.

Since I'm preparing a presentation on using AI in genealogy for the Topeka Genealogical Society this July, I'd love your input. Who do you consider leaders in the genealogy AI space? What blogs, videos, podcasts, or communities have helped you learn? Share your suggestions in the comments—I may discover some new favorites before July!

Data Centers

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 21, 2026
Artificial Intelligence
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/21/data-centers/

Data Centers, Local Control, and the Digital World We Already Depend On

In recent months, Kansans have debated proposals for new data centers. Some communities have welcomed the idea, while others have strongly opposed specific projects because of concerns about water use, electricity demand, land use, and local impact.

I understand those concerns.

Personally, I support the right of local communities to make those decisions. If local landowners and governing bodies believe a proposed data center is not in the best interest of their community—whether because of strain on the water supply, increased energy demand, location concerns, or quality-of-life issues—then I support their ability to say no.

That's local control.

At the same time, these conversations have caused me to think more deeply about what data centers actually are and how much we already depend on them.

We Already Use Data Centers Every Day

When many people hear the phrase *data center*, they picture a giant industrial building full of humming servers supporting artificial intelligence.

And yes, AI does rely on data centers.

But so does much of modern life.

Our personal data is already stored in countless digital systems:

- birth and death records
- Social Security records
- property deeds

- tax records
- voting registration
- military service records
- school transcripts
- hospital records
- prescription histories
- bank accounts
- retirement accounts
- insurance policies
- utility billing
- airline reservations
- phone records
- email
- cloud backups
- streaming services
- online shopping histories

As genealogists, we especially understand this reality.

The digitized census records we search? Stored in data centers.

The newspapers we browse online? Data centers.

DNA matches? Data centers.

Family tree websites? Data centers.

The scanned deeds, probate records, and military files we rely on? Also data centers.

In earlier generations, these same records lived in courthouse vaults, filing cabinets, warehouses, microfilm drawers, and basement storage rooms. Today, the storage looks different—but the concept is not new.

It’s Not Just Artificial Intelligence

As I started thinking about this topic, I realized how many services most of us use without ever thinking about the infrastructure behind them.

Watch a movie on Netflix? Data centers.

Upload files to Dropbox? Data centers.

Use Gmail? Data centers.

Store photos in the cloud? Data centers.

Ask ChatGPT a question? Definitely data centers.

Even criticism of data centers posted on social media likely traveled through one.

That doesn’t mean every proposed facility is automatically a good idea. Far from it.

The Real Questions

The issue, in my opinion, is not whether data centers should exist.

They already do.

And our dependence on them will only grow.

The better questions are:

- Will this particular facility strain local water supplies?
- Will it place unreasonable demands on the electrical grid?
- Who pays for infrastructure upgrades?
- Does the community benefit?
- Is the location appropriate?
- Do local residents support it?
- Do elected local officials support it?

Those are legitimate questions.

Local Control Matters

Kansas has a long tradition of valuing local decision-making.

What works in one county may not work in another.

A community with abundant infrastructure and resources may see opportunity.

Another community may see unacceptable risk.

Both can be reasonable conclusions.

Supporting data infrastructure in general does not require supporting every individual proposal.

And supporting local opposition to a poorly planned project does not mean rejecting technology.

A Thoughtful Balance

I suspect data centers will become one of those issues where nuance gets lost.

Some will portray opposition as anti-technology.

Others will act as if data centers are unnecessary luxuries.

Neither view reflects reality.

Modern society depends on digital infrastructure.

At the same time, communities deserve a voice in how that infrastructure is developed.

For me, the balance is fairly simple:

Yes, data centers are part of modern life.

Yes, we will likely need more of them.

But local communities should have the right to determine what fits their resources, priorities, and future.

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 22, 2026
Crawford,Dodge City
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/22/friday-find-117/

Finding newspaper articles today is often as simple as typing a name into a search box. Thirty-five years ago, that wasn't the case. Back then, many of us spent hours turning the crank on a microfilm reader, slowly scrolling through issue after issue in hopes of spotting a familiar surname.

One of the treasures from those early research days is a handwritten transcription tucked away in my Crawford files. I likely copied this article sometime before 1990, long before the *Dodge City Globe-Republican* was digitized and made searchable online.

Recently, I was able to locate the original article on Newspapers.com in the 12 August 1897 issue of *The Globe-Republican* of Dodge City, Kansas. Seeing the actual newspaper image after all these years was a reminder of how much genealogy research has changed —and how valuable those handwritten notes from the "microfilm era" can still be today.

The article announced the marriage of my great-grandaunt, Lida A. Crawford, daughter of Mary Crawford, to A. H. Lighter. Lida Anita Crawford was the daughter of Washington Marion Crawford and Mary Foster.

Below is the transcription of the article as it appeared in the newspaper.

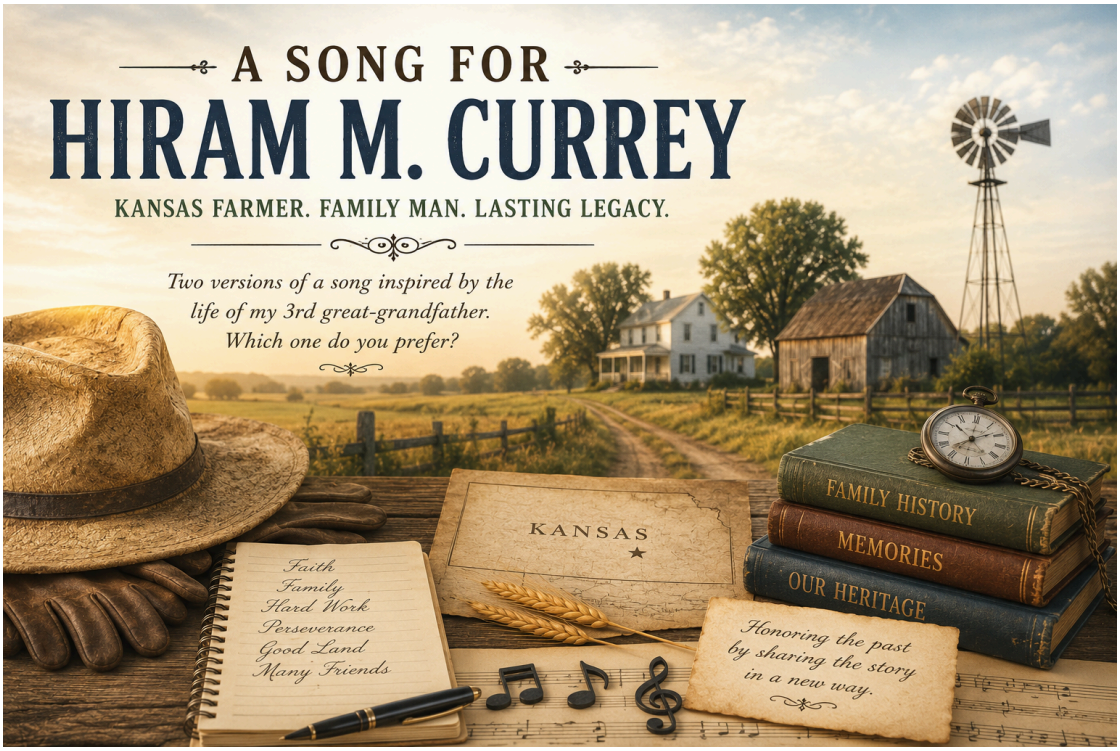
> Married.—Last night, the 11th inst., at the home of the bride's mother, Mrs. Mary Crawford, by Rev. D. E. Hoover, pastor of the M. E. church, Mr. A. H. Lighter to Miss Lida A. Crawford. A number of relatives and friends witnessed the interesting ceremony, and at the conclusion of the marriage congratulated the bride and groom upon their happy undertaking. Both groom and bride are young people highly esteemed, and they have many friends who wish them abundant joy in the married realm. Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

I'm thankful that I took the time years ago to make handwritten copies of articles like this one. At the time, photocopies could be expensive, and in some libraries they were not even an option. Those old notebooks and loose sheets of paper still preserve discoveries made long before newspapers became searchable from home.

Now, thanks to digitization, I can pair those handwritten notes with the original image of the article and preserve both versions for future generations.

Which Version Do You Prefer

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 23, 2026
ABC Biography,Artificial Intelligence
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/23/version/



A Song for Hiram M. Currey

One of the fun side benefits of my **ABC Biography project** has been experimenting with ways to bring my ancestors' stories to life beyond the written word.

After creating an AI-assisted biography of my 3rd great-grandfather, **Hiram M. Currey (1835–1901)**, I decided to take the next step and turn his story into music. Hiram was a Kansas farmer, husband, father of a large family, and a man whose life spanned frontier settlement, Civil War-era militia service, railroad expansion, and the many challenges of nineteenth-century rural life.

Using AI, I created lyrics inspired by his life story and then used **Suno** to generate not one—but two different musical versions of the song.

And now I can't decide which I like better.

One version feels more like a heartfelt frontier ballad, while the other brings a slightly different emotional tone to Hiram's story. Since genealogy is all about sharing stories, I thought I'd let readers weigh in.

Below are the two versions of **"Kansas Wind and Currey Land."** Give them a listen and let me know in the comments:

Which version do you prefer—Version 1 or Version 2?

Version 1

https://youtube.com/watch?v=jVddD48Io64

Video 2

https://youtube.com/watch?v=-oQ8k6pJfjI

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 24, 2026
Currey,SaturdayNightGenealogyFun
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/24/saturday-3/

Calling all Genea-Musings Fans:

It's Saturday Night again —

time for some more **Genealogy Fun!!**

Here is your assignment, if you choose to play along (cue the *Mission Impossible* music, please!):

1. **Do you have an ancestor whose occupation you know little or nothing about?**
2. **Pick a great-grandparent or earlier ancestor who held an unfamiliar job (cooper, cordwainer, hostler, etc.). Look up the occupation and write a short description of what their daily work life might have been like.**

The **1900 census** lists my great-grandfather, **Hiram Currey**, as a **magnetic healer**. That's certainly not an occupation we encounter today!

I've written about this unusual occupation before:

Fake or Real?
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2021/01/13/fake-or-real/

Previous Saturday Night Genealogy Fun post:
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2025/02/23/saturday-night-genealogy-fun-145/

For this week's challenge, I decided to turn to **ChatGPT** and ask: *What might a typical day have looked like for Hiram as a magnetic healer in 1900?*

What Was a Magnetic Healer?

"Magnetic healing" was part of the broader world of **alternative medicine** in the late nineteenth century, alongside osteopathy, chiropractic, Christian Science, herbal remedies, and patent medicines.

Despite the name, magnetic healers generally weren't using actual magnets. Instead, the practice was based on the idea of **animal magnetism** or a natural life force within the body—concepts popularized in the late 1700s by Franz Mesmer (yes, the source of the word *mesmerize*).

Practitioners believed illness resulted from blocked or unbalanced energy, and that healing could be promoted through touch, manipulation, and restoring that energy flow.

A Day in the Life of Hiram Currey, Magnetic Healer

If Hiram was actively practicing in **Leavenworth County, Kansas**, in 1900, his day may have looked something like this:

Morning: Seeing Patients

Hiram may have worked from his home, a rented office, or perhaps a room in a commercial building. Patients likely arrived by horse and buggy after hearing about his services through word of mouth or newspaper advertisements.

People may have sought treatment for:

- Rheumatism
- Nervous disorders
- Chronic pain
- Paralysis
- Stomach complaints
- Headaches
- General weakness or exhaustion

His office probably would have been simple:

- A few chairs
- A treatment couch or sturdy chair
- Minimal equipment
- Perhaps certificates or advertisements meant to inspire confidence

Patient Treatments

A session may have involved:

- Placing hands on the patient's back, shoulders, or limbs
- Slow sweeping hand motions
- Pressure or manipulation of painful areas
- Reassuring conversation about restoring balance and circulation

Some practitioners believed they were transferring healing energy through touch.

A patient suffering from chronic back pain might spend 20–30 minutes receiving treatment while Hiram explained how the body's natural forces were being restored.

Midday: House Calls

Since this was rural Kansas, house calls were likely part of the job.

Hiram may have visited farm families dealing with:

- Arthritis
- Injuries from farm labor
- "Nervous exhaustion"
- Chronic illnesses conventional doctors had failed to cure

And honestly, in 1900, conventional medicine often had limited options. Before antibiotics and many modern treatments, families were often willing to try alternatives.

Afternoon: Running the Business

As a self-employed practitioner, Hiram also had the practical side of business to manage:

- Collecting payments
- Scheduling appointments
- Advertising in local newspapers
- Building a reputation through satisfied patients

An ad from the era might have read something like:

"Magnetic healing for chronic disease. No drugs. Consultation free."

Evening: Family Life

By 1900, Hiram was also a husband and father with a growing family.

His day probably ended much like many working fathers of the era:

- Supper with the family
- Discussion of finances
- Reading the newspaper
- Planning the next day's work

Since Hiram later worked as a miner, carpenter, baker, teamster, and laborer, magnetic healing appears to have been just one chapter in a varied working life.

Historical Perspective

Today, "magnetic healer" sounds unusual—perhaps even questionable—but in 1900 it would not have seemed nearly so odd.

Americans could choose from:

- Traditional physicians
- Osteopaths
- Chiropractors
- Midwives
- Herbal healers
- Magnetic healers
- Patent medicine sellers

Medical licensing was evolving, but healthcare remained a very mixed landscape.

So while I may smile at seeing **"magnetic healer"** on my great-grandfather's census entry, his neighbors may have viewed it as a perfectly respectable occupation.

Now it's your turn—**what unusual occupations appear in your family tree?**

Monday's Diggings

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 25, 2026
New York,Wells
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/25/mondays-diggings-33/

Wells Land in the Sacandaga Patent

As I continue digging through my old **WELLS** research notebook, I'm rediscovering records I collected years ago—some of which deserve a closer look.

Today's find is an early deed involving two Wells brothers: **Thomas Wells** and **Green Wells**, sons of **Nathaniel Wells**, in **Broadalbin, Montgomery County, New York**.

At first glance, this appears to be a routine land transaction. On 13 January 1806, Thomas Wells and his wife Jerusha sold land to Green Wells for **$464**. However, one phrase in the deed caught my attention:

> "all that certain parcel of land situate in Saundaga Patent and is known as a part of lot number three in said Patent…"

That reference places the land within the **Sacandaga Patent**, a colonial New York land grant that helps place the Wells family within the early settlement history of what is now Fulton County, New York.

For genealogists, land patents provide valuable historical context. A patent was the original grant of land from the colonial government to investors or proprietors. Later settlers typically acquired portions of those lands through purchase. Thus, this deed suggests that the Wells family's Broadalbin property was part of a much earlier colonial land grant.

Was this land originally acquired by their father, Nathaniel Wells? Was this deed part of a family land redistribution between brothers? Those are questions worth further research.

Below is the transcription of the deed as preserved in my files.

Transcription

> This Indenture made the thirteenth day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand
>
> 401

Eight hundred and six Between Thomas Wells of the Town of Broadalbin in the County of Montgomery and State of New York and Jerusha his wife of the first part and Green Wells of the Town County and State aforesaid of the second part Witnesseth that the said party of the First par for and in consideration of the sum of four hundred and sixty four dollars Lawf ul money of the United States to him in hand paid at or before the ensealing and deliver ery of these presents by the said party of the second part the receipt whereof is hereby con fessed and acknowledged Hath granted bargained sold aliened remised released con veyed assessed enfeoffed and confirmed and by these presents doth grant bargain sell Alien remise release convey assign enfeoff and confirm fully freely and absolutely un To the said party of the second part in his actual possession now being and to his heirs And assigns forever all that certain parcel of land situate in [Saundaga] Pa Tent and is known as a part of lot number three in said Pattent Beginning at the most Northerly Corner of fifty eight of land belonging to the said Thomas Wills at a stake in and heap of Stones and runs from thence North thirty one degrees and thirty minutes tes west ninety Eight chains and sixty five links to a stake and stones thence South Sixty seven degrees and thirty minutes west sixteen chains and forty links to a stake thence South thirty one degrees and thirty minutes East ninety eight chains and for ty three links to the corner of the said Thomas Wells land thence north sixty one degree s and thirty minutes East Eight chains and eight links thence South thirty one degrees and thirty minutes East eight chains and twenty two links thence North Sixty one degrees and thirty minutes East eight chains and Eight links to the place of beginning containing one hundred and fifty five acres one Rood and twe nty two perches of Land Together with all and singular the appurtenances privileg is and advantages whatsoever unto the said above mentioned and described pre mises in any wise appertaining or belonging and the reversion and reversions re mainder and remainders rents issues and profits thereof and also all the esta te right title interest property claim and demand whatsoever as well in law in equity of the said party of the first part of in and to the same or any part or par cel thereof with the appurtenances To have and to hold the above granted bargain ed and described premises with the appurtenances unto the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns for their own proper use benefit and behoof forever and the said party of the first part for himself his heirs executors and administrators doth covenant promise grant and agree to and with the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns that he the said party of the first part at the time of inse aling and delivery of these presents is lawfully seized in his own right of in and to the aforesaid described premises hereby granted and conveyed with the appurte nances as of a good sure perfect absolute and indefeasible Estate of inheritance in the law in fee simple without any manner of condition to alter change deter mine or defeat the same and hath in law good right full power and lawful auth ority to grant bargain sell convey and release the above said described land and prem ises with the appurtenances unto the said party of the second part his heirs and as signs in manner aforesaid and also that he the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns shall and may from time to time and at all times and for ever here after peaceably and quietly have hold occupy possess and enjoy the said hereby grant ed and bargained premises with the appurtenances and also that the said party of the first part and his heirs and all and every person or persons whomsoever lawfully or equitably deriving any Estate right title dower Jointure or interest of in or to the herein before granted premises by from under or in trust for him and them shall and will at any time or times hereafter upon the reasonable request of the said party of the

Page 402 (image 206 of 488)

Second part his heirs or assigns and at the proper costs and charges in the said party of the first part his heirs or assigns make do and execute or cause or to be made done and executed all and every such further and other lawful and able conveyances and assurances in the law for the better and more effectually vesting and confirming the premises hereby intended to be granted in and to the said party the second part his heirs and assigns for ever as by the said party of the second part heirs or assigns or his or their counsel learned in the law shall be reasonably devised advised or required and the said party of the first part for himself his heirs and administrators engage to warrant and by these presents for ever to defend the above ve described and released premises and every part and parcel thereof In witness where of the said parties of the first part hath hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written Thomas Wills & Jerusha Wells SS) signed sealed and deliver ed in the presence of Alexr St John Solomon Riddle State of New York Be it remembered that on the nineteenth day of January in the year of our Lord One thousand Eight hund red and Eight before me Willard Trowbridge one of the Masters in chancery personally ap peared Thomas Wills and Jerusha his wife and severally acknowledged the within in strument to be their respective voluntary act and deed and that they respectively Signed sealed and delivered the same to and for the use and purpose therein mentioned and the

said Jerusha being by me examined separate and apart from her said husband
acknowledged that she executed the said instrument freely without any fear orcom
pulsion of her said husband and I knowing the said Thomas Wells and Jerusha his wife
respectively and that they are the same persons described in and who executed the said
Instrument and finding therein no interlineations and the words (one eight)who
ught on Erasure in line fourteen from the top I do allow the same to be Recorded
Willard Trowbridge Master in Chancery
Recorded the twenty second January 1808
Henry F. Tates Clerk

Citation

New York, Fulton County. Deeds, 1772-1908. Film #7138101. Thomas Wells, 30 Jan 1806; vol. 2: pages 400-402; 205 and 206 of 488, digitized images, *FamilySearch* www.familysearch.org : viewed online 9 May 2026.

Why This Matters

This deed provides more than just evidence of land ownership.

It establishes:

- Thomas Wells and Green Wells as residents of Broadalbin
- Jerusha as Thomas Wells' wife
- a financial transaction between brothers
- ownership of land in **Lot 3 of the Sacandaga Patent**
- a clue for tracing earlier Wells land ownership in Montgomery County records

Old notes tucked away in a research notebook can sometimes provide more than expected. What once looked like "just another deed" now offers clues about the Wells family's place in early New York history.

Bringing Hiram Currey's Story to Life

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 26, 2026
Artificial Intelligence,Currey,Google Notebook LM
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/26/story-2/

with AI Video

One of the things I enjoy most about using AI in genealogy is experimenting with new ways to tell family stories. A traditional narrative biography is valuable, but sometimes a different format helps bring an ancestor's life to life in a new and engaging way.

After creating an **ABC Biography** for my 3rd great-grandfather, **Hiram M. Currey (1835–1901)**, I decided to see what AI could do with his story in video form.

Using the narrative report and research I had assembled, I turned to **Google Notebook LM** to create an infographic, an audio overview, and a cinematic video interpretation of Hiram's life.

For the first video, I took the infographic and audio overview created by Notebook LM and combined them in **Canva** to produce a narrated video presentation. This version is probably the most grounded in the documented facts, since it relies directly on the information I provided.

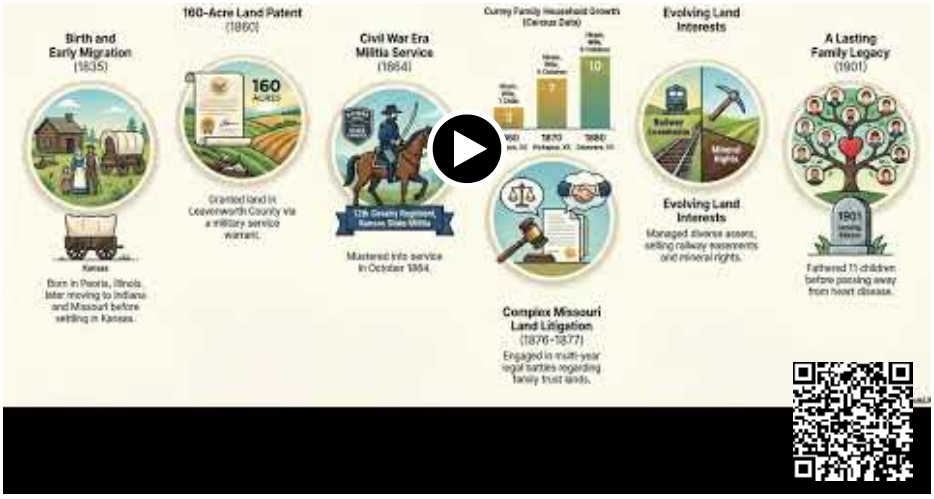
The second video is Notebook LM's cinematic interpretation of Hiram's story. While visually engaging, cinematic AI video comes with an important caution: the imagery represents an artistic interpretation, not documented photographs or precise historical reconstructions. Since I have no known photographs of Hiram or his immediate family, the visuals should be viewed as atmosphere rather than evidence.

Still, I find these experiments fascinating. They offer a new way to engage with family history and perhaps help others connect emotionally with ancestors who otherwise might remain simply names and dates in a database.

Below are the two videos.

Video 1: Infographic + Audio Overview Video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=FmhqJX49tQ0


Birth and Early Migration (1835)
Born in Peoria, Illinois, later moving to Indiana and Missouri before settling in Kansas.
160-Acre Land Patent (1860)
160 ACRES
Granted land in Leavenworth County via a military service warrant.
Civil War Era Militia Service (1864)
12th Cavalry Regiment, Kansas State Militia
Mustered into service in October 1864.
Currey Family Household Growth (Census Data)
1860
1870
1880
Complex Missouri Land Litigation (1876-1877)
Engaged in multi-year legal battles regarding family trust lands.
Evolving Land Interests
Railway Investments
Mineral Rights
Evolving Land Interests
Managed diverse assets, selling railway easements and mineral rights.
A Lasting Family Legacy (1901)
1901
Fathered 11 children before passing away from heart disease.

Video 2: Cinematic Interpretation

https://youtube.com/watch?v=j6Hj8DZAYos

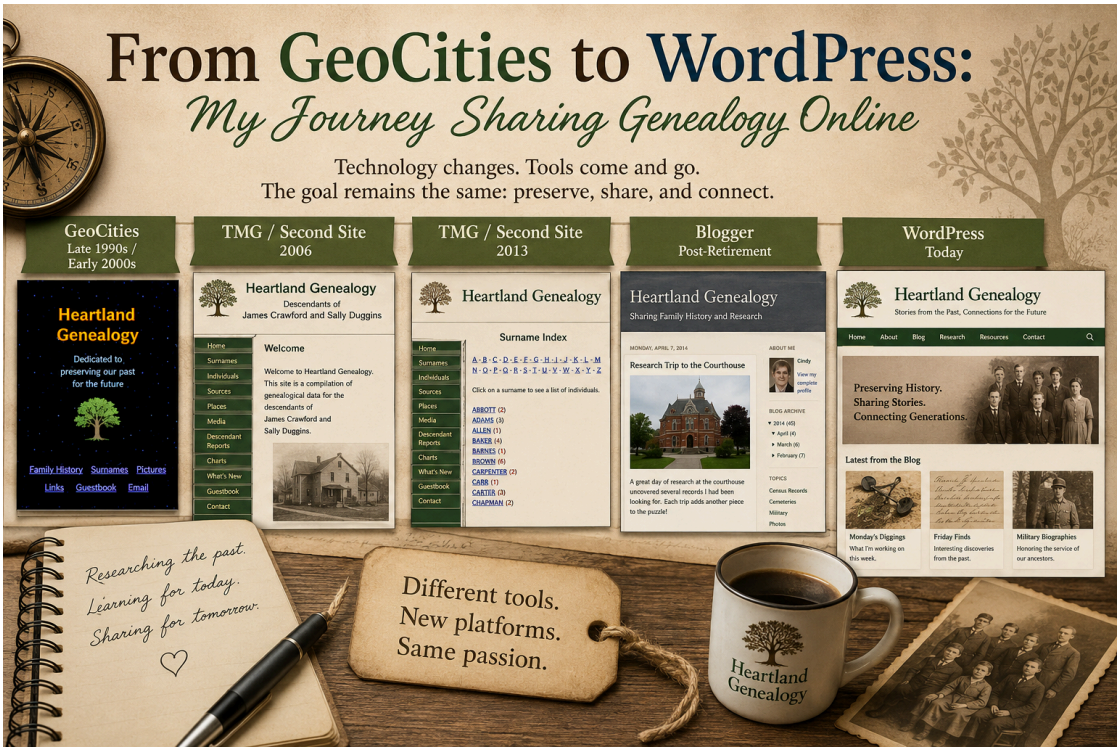
I'd be curious to know what you think.

Do you prefer the more factual infographic-based presentation, or the cinematic storytelling version?

And more broadly—do these types of AI-generated media help make family history more accessible and engaging, or do you prefer sticking with traditional written narratives and photographs?

From GeoCities to WordPress

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 27, 2026
genealogy
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/27/from-geocities-to-wordpress/



My Journey Sharing Genealogy Online

How long have you been sharing your genealogy research online?

For me, that journey goes back to the early days of the internet.

At the time, I was a high school librarian and technology coordinator. While I was responsible for the computers in the school, much of my job involved teaching teachers and students how to use technology effectively. I've always considered myself more of an *information specialist* than anything else.

Thus, when the web was still relatively new, putting my genealogy online served two purposes. It was a way to share my family history research, but it was also a way for me to learn about the technology itself. Building web pages taught me about HTML, website structure, and online publishing.

The GeoCities Years

My first genealogy website lived on GeoCities.

Those who were online in those early years likely remember GeoCities as one of the first places ordinary people could create a website. Long before social media, before online family trees, and before blogging, GeoCities gave hobbyists a place to share their interests with the world.

For me, that interest was genealogy.

Those early pages were simple by today's standards, but they represented something exciting: the ability to share my research with anyone who might stumble across it.

Around that same time, the USGenWeb Project and Kansas GenWeb were getting started. I became involved with both efforts and even managed county pages for a while. Those volunteer projects reflected the collaborative spirit of early online genealogy—researchers helping one another make local records and information more accessible.

The Master Genealogist and Second Site

As my genealogy database grew, maintaining individual web pages became less practical.

When I switched from Personal Ancestral File (PAF) to *The Master Genealogist* (TMG), I found a much easier way to share my research. John Cardinal's *Second Site* software allowed me to transform my genealogy database into a searchable website.

Instead of manually updating page after page, I could regenerate the site directly from my database.

That was a game changer.

By 2006, Heartland Genealogy had become a full-featured genealogy website hosted at *heartlandgenealogy.org*. Visitors could browse surnames, view individual pages, and explore family connections.

While I also maintained a tree on Ancestry, it did not contain everything from my files. My own website allowed me to share my research on my own terms.

Software Changes and New Directions

Eventually, support for *The Master Genealogist* ended, and I migrated my database to RootsMagic.

RootsMagic initially offered website creation features similar to what I had used before, but those capabilities eventually disappeared. Like many genealogists, I had to rethink how I wanted to share my work online.

After retirement, I wanted to do more than simply publish database information. I wanted to tell stories, share discoveries, and connect with other researchers.

That led me to Blogger.

Blogger was an easy way to begin sharing regular genealogy content, but Google has a reputation for discontinuing products and features. Wanting more long-term control, I eventually moved Heartland Genealogy to WordPress, where it remains today.

Why Sharing Online Matters

Living in northeast Kansas, I am about 75 miles from the nearest genealogy library or society. I do not live near my ancestral homes. I do not live near cousins who share my research interests.

The internet changed that.

What began as a technology learning exercise became a lifeline to the genealogy community.

Through websites, blogs, online trees, and now social media, I have been able to connect with cousins, fellow researchers, and genealogists around the world.

The tools have changed dramatically over the years.

GeoCities gave way to database-generated websites. Those gave way to blogs. Blogs now coexist with videos, podcasts, online trees, and even AI-assisted storytelling.

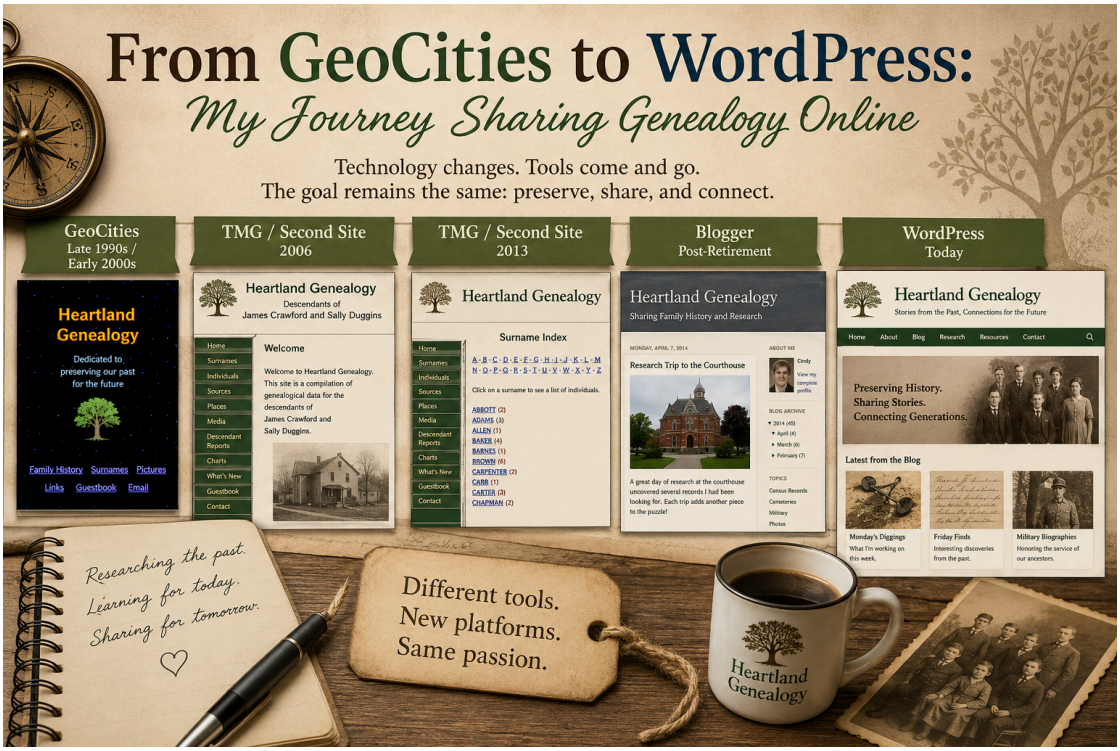
But the purpose remains the same:

To preserve family history.
To share discoveries.
To connect with others.

And perhaps, to keep learning along the way.

A Trip Down Memory Lane

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 28, 2026
genealogy
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/28/memory-lane/



Heartland Genealogy Through the Years

Yesterday, I shared the story of how Heartland Genealogy evolved from GeoCities to WordPress.

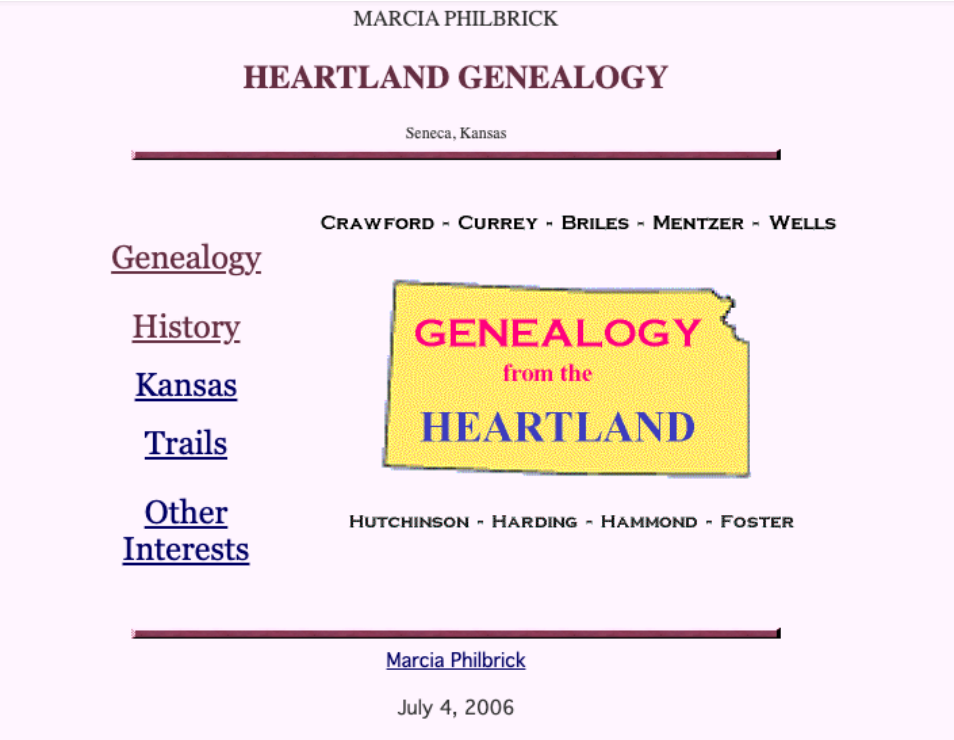
After writing that post, I took a trip down memory lane with the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine—and discovered that some of my earlier genealogy websites still survive.

Looking at those archived pages feels a bit like opening an old scrapbook. Some things made me smile. Some made me laugh. And all of them reminded me how much both genealogy and technology have changed.

2006: GeoCities and the Early Web

Yes, Heartland Genealogy really did begin on GeoCities.

Here's a screenshot from 2006.



That page takes me right back.

At the time, I was a school librarian and technology coordinator. While I was responsible for the computers, much of my work involved helping teachers and students learn to use technology effectively.

I've always thought of myself more as an *information specialist* than a technology expert.

Creating a website became part genealogy project and part professional learning exercise.

Building pages taught me about HTML, hyperlinks, navigation, and the organization of information on the web.

And genealogy gave me the perfect excuse to experiment.

Looking at that page now, several things stand out:

- my surnames were clearly front and center
- Kansas already had a visual presence
- genealogy and history were linked from the beginning
- "Other Interests" suggests I wasn't entirely single-minded

The design may scream "early internet," but at the time, having your own website felt cutting edge.

The Collaborative Web: USGenWeb and Kansas GenWeb

Those were also the years when USGenWeb and Kansas GenWeb were getting started.

I became involved with both projects and even managed county pages for a time.

That early genealogy web community was built on volunteers who believed that local history and genealogical information should be freely available online.

Those projects helped shape how I thought about sharing research.

Genealogy wasn't just about collecting information for myself.

It was about making it accessible to others.

The Master Genealogist and Second Site

As my research database grew, maintaining a hand-built website became impractical.

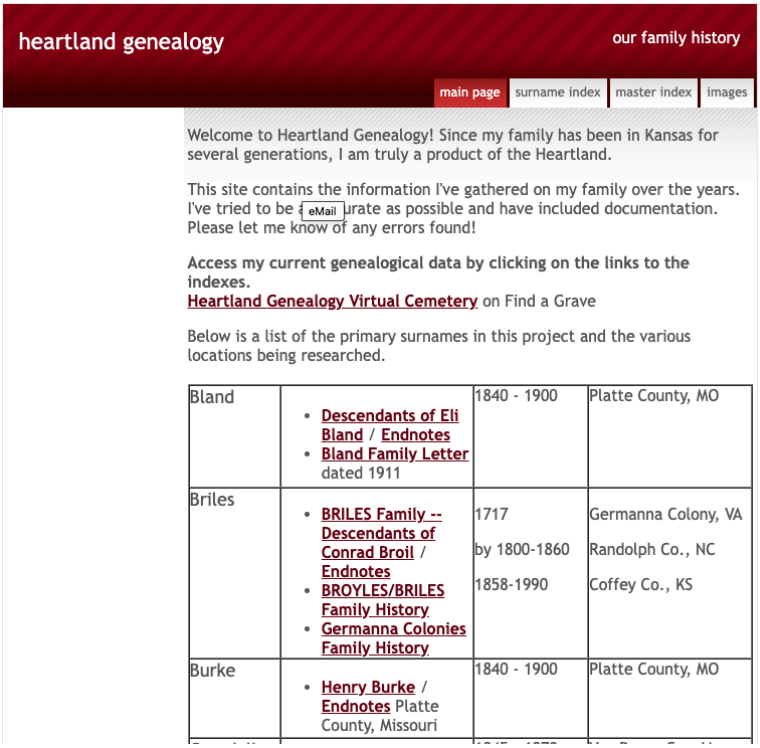
When I switched from Personal Ancestral File (PAF) to *The Master Genealogist*, I found a much easier solution.

John Cardinal's *Second Site* software allowed me to transform my genealogy database into a searchable website.

That was a game changer.

Instead of manually editing dozens—or hundreds—of pages, I could regenerate the entire site directly from my database.

By then, Heartland Genealogy had moved to *heartlandgenealogy.org*.


heartland genealogy
our family history
main page
surname index
master index
images
Welcome to Heartland Genealogy! Since my family has been in Kansas for several generations, I am truly a product of the Heartland.
This site contains the information I've gathered on my family over the years. I've tried to be accurate as possible and have included documentation. Please let me know of any errors found!
eMail
Access my current genealogical data by clicking on the links to the indexes.
Heartland Genealogy Virtual Cemetery on Find a Grave
Below is a list of the primary surnames in this project and the various locations being researched.
Bland
Descendants of Eli Bland / Endnotes
Bland Family Letter dated 1911
1840 - 1900
Platte County, MO
Briles
BRILES Family -- Descendants of Conrad Broil / Endnotes
BROYLES/BRILES Family History
Germanna Colonies Family History
1717
by 1800-1860
1858-1990
Germanna Colony, VA
Randolph Co., NC
Coffey Co., KS
Burke
Henry Burke / Endnotes Platte County, Missouri
1840 - 1900
Platte County, MO

This version of the site offered:

- surname indexes
- individual profiles
- place indexes
- descendant reports
- source information
- charts

While I also maintained a tree on Ancestry, it did not include everything in my files.

My own website allowed me to share my research on my own terms.

From Data to Storytelling

Eventually, simply publishing database information wasn't enough.

I wanted to tell stories.

That led me to Blogger.

Blogging gave me a way to share discoveries as they happened:

- interesting documents
- research questions
- ancestor stories
- courthouse finds
- military records
- newspaper discoveries

Instead of simply presenting names, dates, and relationships, I could explain *why* a record mattered.

That was a very different kind of sharing.

Heartland Genealogy
Tackling Those Brick Walls
Home
About Me
Privacy
Josie's Poetry
Untangling James Crawford
Crawford Brick Wall
Heartland RootsMagic Data
My Wordpress Blog
Monday, April 22, 2024
Henry
Do you have slave owners in your tree? I wish that I could say that I don't, but I do have a few. Thus, when I come across a document identifying a slave, I feel obligated to share it. Below is a deed where Matthew M. Bland grants freedom to a slave named Henry -- at the cost of $1000. I have no idea who paid the $1000 but that would have been a lot of money in 1855!
Platte County, Missouri
Volume L
Film 988442 DGS 8486854
image 175 of 431
Page 300
M. M. Bland
Subscribe with Feedly
Follow
Search This Blog
Search
Marcia Crawford Philbrick

WordPress and Long-Term Control

Eventually, I moved from Blogger to WordPress.

Part of that decision was practical. Google has a habit of discontinuing products and features, and I wanted more long-term control over my content.

But the move also reflected how my genealogy work had changed.

Heartland Genealogy was no longer simply a place to publish database material.

It had become a place for:

- Monday's Diggings
- Friday Finds
- ancestor biographies
- military biographies
- document transcriptions
- proof discussions
- historical reflections
- videos
- AI-assisted genealogy projects

Why Online Sharing Still Matters

Living in northeast Kansas, I am about 75 miles from the nearest genealogy library or society.

I do not live near my ancestral homes.

I do not live near cousins who share my research interests.

The internet changed that.

What began as a way to learn technology became a way to connect.

The platforms have changed dramatically:

GeoCities.
USGenWeb.
TMG.
Second Site.
Google Sites.
Blogger.

WordPress.
Ancestry.
AI tools.

But the purpose remains the same:

Preserve family history.

Share discoveries.

Connect with others.

And keep learning.

Your Turn

Did you have a genealogy website in the early days of the web?

GeoCities? RootsWeb? USGenWeb? A hand-coded personal site?

If so, have you checked whether the Wayback Machine remembers it?

You might be surprised what survives.

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 29, 2026
Crawford,Indiana,Warren County
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/29/friday-find-118/

A Handwritten Note about the "Other" James Crawford

Do you have handwritten notes tucked away in your genealogy files that lack any documentation? Perhaps they were passed along by another researcher, copied years ago, or slipped into a folder with the intention of "looking into that later."

Today's *Friday Find* is exactly that sort of document.

At first glance, one might assume this handwritten note refers to my ancestor, **James Crawford**. After all, it mentions a James Crawford connected to the same general time and place as my research.

But that assumption would be wrong.

This note actually refers to the *other* James Crawford—the one who has long complicated my Crawford research.

For those unfamiliar with my Crawford brick wall, multiple men named James Crawford were living in Kentucky at roughly the same time. My ancestor, **James Crawford who married Sally Smith Duggins**, lived in **Garrard County, Kentucky** prior to 1800. Another James Crawford, the man discussed in this note, married **Martha Knight**.

To make matters even more confusing, these two James Crawfords appear to have traveled in overlapping circles. Both were associated with **Garrard County, Kentucky**. Both may have spent time in **Barren County, Kentucky**. Both later migrated to **Preble County, Ohio**, where records suggest they owned adjoining land. It's easy to see how records, notes, and online trees can merge the two men into one.

The clue that immediately identifies this note as belonging to the *other* James Crawford is the wife's name: **Martha Knight**. My James Crawford's wife was **Sally Smith Duggins Crawford**.

Here is the transcription of the note:

> *James Crawford*
> born in Virginia 1770
> Married Martha Knight
> born in Kentucky.
> Came to Warren County

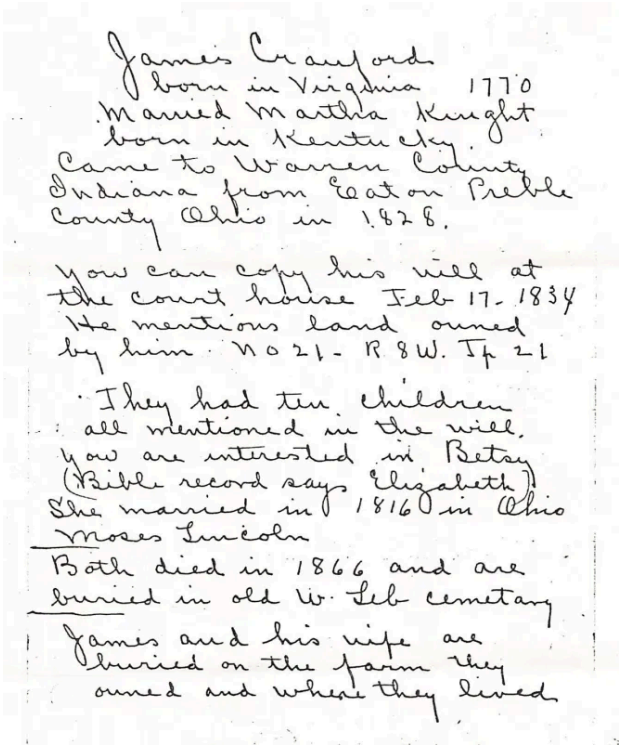
Indiana from eastern Preble County Ohio in 1828.

You can copy his will at the court house. File 17. 1834 He mentions land owned by him. No 24 – R 8 W. Tp 21

They had ten children all mentioned in the will. You are interested in Betsy Bible records say, Elizabeth She married in 1816 in Ohio Moses Lincoln

Both died in 1866 and are buried in old **W. Leb** cemetery

James and his wife are buried on the farm they owned and where they lived.


James Crawford
born in Virginia 1770
Married Martha Knight
born in Kentucky.
Came to Warren County
Indiana from Eaton Preble
County Ohio in 1828.

You can copy his will at
the court house Feb 17. 1834
He mentions land owned
by him No 24 - R 8 W. Tp 21

They had ten children
all mentioned in the will.
You are interested in Betsy
(Bible record says Elizabeth)
She married in 1816 in Ohio
Moses Lincoln

Both died in 1866 and are
buried in old W. Leb cemetary

James and his wife are
buried on the farm they
owned and where they lived

This little note raises several interesting questions.

Who wrote it? Was it correspondence from another researcher? A courthouse lookup? A note copied from a conversation? Unfortunately, there is no attribution, date, or explanation.

Even so, the note contains useful clues:

- James Crawford was reportedly born in Virginia in 1770
- He married Martha Knight
- The family moved from eastern **Preble County, Ohio**, to **Warren County, Indiana**, in 1828
- His probate file was supposedly filed in **1834**
- The note references land ownership
- “Betsy” is identified as **Elizabeth**, with a marriage in Ohio in 1816 to **Moses Lincoln**
- Burial information is provided for James, Martha, and Elizabeth

Of course, as genealogists, we know that undocumented notes are clues—not evidence.

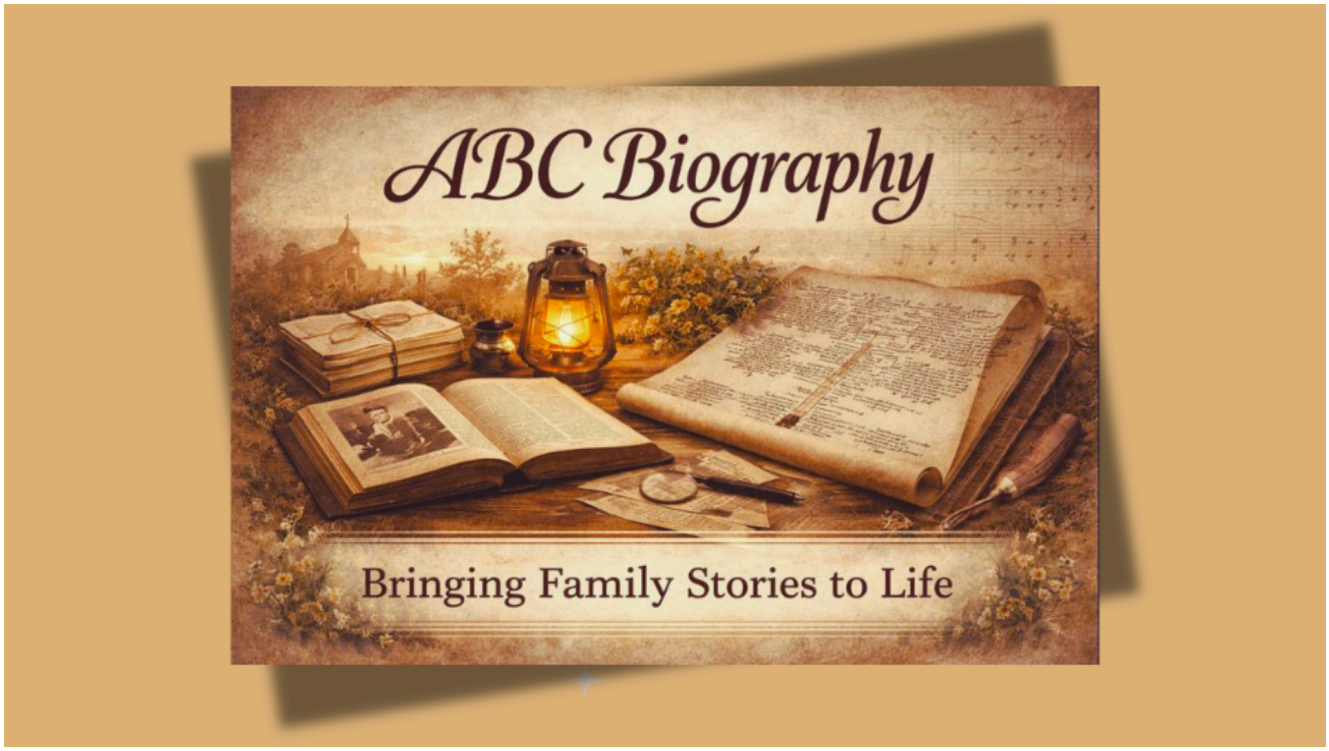
Still, this is exactly the sort of discovery I enjoy in a *Friday Find*. A single handwritten page preserved in an old file can serve as a roadmap for future research, even when every claim must be verified against original records.

And in this case, it serves as a reminder of just how messy same-name research can become when two men named James Crawford lived in the same region at the same time.

Do you keep undocumented research notes in your files? Have any of them led to valuable discoveries?

Angelina Jane Burke Currey

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 30, 2026
ABC Biography,Burke,Currey
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/30/angelina-currey/



An ABC Biography Project

As part of my ongoing **ABC Biography** series—an approach inspired by Randy Seaver of *Genea-Musings*—I'm using artificial intelligence tools to help transform traditional genealogical research into engaging family stories.

Randy's ABC approach combines three creative steps:

- **A** — an AI-assisted biography based on documented genealogical research
- **B** — a song inspired by the ancestor's life story
- **C** — AI-generated interpretations such as audio overviews, infographics, or cinematic presentations

Rather than combining all three into a single post, I'm sharing each step separately.

This post focuses on the **biography** of **Angelina Jane Burke Currey (1836–1901)**.

Angelina's life spanned an extraordinary period in American history. Born before the Civil War, she lived through the turbulent Bleeding Kansas era, westward expansion, railroad growth, and the dramatic transformation of frontier communities into established towns and farms.

Using documented genealogical research, I asked AI to help turn the facts of Angelina's life into a narrative biography designed for family readers—something more approachable than a traditional genealogical report while still grounded in the available records.

I always find it fascinating to see how AI can help reshape our research into stories that descendants may be more likely to read and enjoy.

The following is Angelina's story.

Angelina Jane Burke Currey (1836–1901)

A Kentucky Girl with Frontier Roots

Angelina Jane Burke was born on 30 October 1836 in Kentucky, the daughter of **Henry F. Burke** and **Elizabeth Ann Bland**. Like many nineteenth-century Americans, details about her birthplace vary slightly in surviving records, with some suggesting Tennessee or Illinois. Such inconsistencies were common in an era when information was often supplied from memory rather than official documentation. What remains clear is that Angelina grew up in a family moving westward, following the migration patterns that shaped so many American families in the decades before the Civil War.

By 1850, thirteen-year-old Angelina was living in Platte County, Missouri, in the household of her mother, Elizabeth. Missouri in the 1850s was a place of opportunity but also increasing tension. Positioned at the crossroads of North and South, the state was deeply affected by the growing national conflict over slavery and westward expansion.

Angelina was not an only child. Family records indicate connections to siblings **John M. Burke**, **Milton E. Burke**, and likely **Sarah (Burke) Hornbuckle**, whose names appear with Angelina in later legal matters involving family property. These records suggest a family whose relationships—and responsibilities—continued long into adulthood.

Marriage and a New Beginning

On 3 August 1856, Angelina married **Hiram M. Currey** in Weston, Platte County, Missouri. Weston was a thriving Missouri River town during the 1850s, filled with commerce, travelers, and families headed west in search of opportunity.

Soon after their marriage, Angelina and Hiram settled in Kansas Territory, placing themselves in one of the most turbulent regions in the country. Kansas in the late 1850s was not a quiet frontier. It was the center of violent political conflict as pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions fought over whether Kansas would enter the Union as a free or slave state.

For a young bride, frontier life required strength, patience, and hard work. There were no modern conveniences. Cooking meant working over a wood stove, laundry was labor-intensive, food preservation was a constant necessity, and raising children demanded endurance. Life was rewarding, but it was rarely easy.

Building a Family

Angelina and Hiram built a large family together, raising ten children. Like many nineteenth-century mothers, Angelina experienced both joy and heartbreak, as not all of her children survived into adulthood.

Their children were:

- **Sarah Evelina Currey** (1859–1884) – Born 31 January 1859. She married **Santford D. Morris** on 25 September 1879 in Leavenworth County, Kansas. Sarah died on 4 December 1884 at a young age.
- **John Henry Currey** (1861–1898) – Born 11 March 1861. He married **Mary O'Rourke** on 1 December 1890 in Lansing, Kansas. John died on 14 April 1898 in Leavenworth.
- **Mary Caroline Currey** (1864–1945) – Born 8 May 1864. She married **John Henry Spears** on 12 February 1886. Mary later moved west and died in California on 16 May 1945.
- Hiram Miles Currey (1866–1943) – Born 23 October 1866 in Missouri. He married **Winifred Mae Hutchinson** on 13 May 1891 in Kansas City, Missouri. He died on 15 September 1943 in Dodge City, Kansas.
- **William Quincy Currey** (1868–1952) – Born 11 December 1868 in Kansas. He married **Jessie A. Myers** in 1891 and later **Frances B. Lorede** in 1923. William died on 3 March 1952 in Downey, California.
- Ja**mes Gilbert Currey** (1871–1942) – Born 10 October 1871. He married **Mary "Mamie" Ridge** in 1895 and died in 1942.
- **Elizabeth Jane Currey (**1874–1945) – Born 22 May 1874 in Kansas. She married **Robert Rigby** in 1894 and died in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1945.
- **Dora Ann Currey** (1876–1968) – Born 14 October 1876 in Lansing, Kansas. She married **Charles Lee Marts** in 1901 and later died in Long Beach, California.
- **Marion Franklin Currey** (1881–1903) – Born 12 April 1881 in Kansas. He died young at age twenty-two in 1903.
- **Frank Currey (**1884–1885) – Born 2 November 1884. Frank lived only a few months, dying in February 1885.

Life on the Kansas Frontier

Angelina spent most of her married life in Leavenworth County, Kansas, where census records place the family consistently over several decades. Their moves between Kickapoo, Steuben, and Delaware Townships reflect the realities of farming life, land ownership, and changing opportunities.

Life for a farm wife in nineteenth-century Kansas was demanding. Angelina would have managed cooking, sewing, cleaning, preserving food, tending children, and likely helping with livestock or other farm duties. Large families required constant work, and women often served as the emotional and practical center of the household.

Kansas itself was rapidly changing during these years. Railroads expanded, towns grew, and agricultural communities became more established. Families like the Curreys helped shape that development.

Land, Opportunity, and Financial Challenges

The surviving records reveal that Angelina was more than simply a passive observer of family affairs. She appears in multiple land transactions alongside her husband, showing involvement in the practical business of property ownership.

In 1871, land owned by the family was sold at sheriff's sale, suggesting financial pressures. Yet the family continued rebuilding. In 1879, Angelina herself purchased twenty acres in Leavenworth County—an interesting reminder that married women increasingly participated in property ownership during this era.

As Kansas developed, the Curreys' land gained commercial value. In 1887, they granted a railroad easement across part of their property, reflecting the tremendous expansion of rail transportation during the period. Two years later, they sold coal and mineral rights, suggesting the land offered additional economic opportunity beyond farming.

But prosperity could be uncertain. In 1893, financial difficulties again surfaced when legal action resulted in foreclosure proceedings and the loss of additional land. Such setbacks were common for farming families, especially during periods of economic instability.

Burke Family Legal Matters

Angelina also remained connected to her Burke family roots through legal proceedings involving inherited property in Missouri.

During the 1870s, Angelina and Hiram, together with Guilford and Sarah Hornbuckle, pursued court action involving John M. Burke and Milton E. Burke over division of family land in Platte County, Missouri.

Inheritance disputes were common in nineteenth-century America, particularly when multiple heirs inherited property together. Dividing land fairly—or converting shared ownership into individual ownership—often required legal action. These cases remind us that family life was not always simple, even among close relatives.

Final Years

By 1900, Angelina and Hiram had been married for forty-four years. They had raised a large family, endured financial struggles, buried children, and witnessed enormous changes in the world around them.

Then, in 1901, tragedy struck quickly. Hiram died in early March. Just weeks later, Angelina followed him in death on 26 March 1901 at Lansing, Kansas, at the age of sixty-four.

Newspaper notices described her as an old resident of the community—a simple but meaningful acknowledgment of a life spent rooted in the area.

She was buried at **Mount Muncie Cemetery** in Leavenworth, alongside her husband.

Historical Context: The World Angelina Knew

Angelina's lifetime spanned one of the most remarkable periods in American history.

When she was born in 1836, Andrew Jackson had recently left the presidency, and much of the Midwest remained frontier territory. Travel was slow, communication limited, and daily life physically demanding.

As a young woman, she lived through the violent years of *Bleeding Kansas*, when armed conflict erupted over slavery in the Kansas Territory. She witnessed the Civil War, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Reconstruction, and the dramatic westward expansion that transformed the nation.

Railroads changed transportation and commerce during her lifetime. Communities that once felt isolated became increasingly connected. Telegraphs and newspapers spread information more quickly than ever before.

Medical care, however, remained limited. Childbirth was dangerous. Infectious diseases were common. The loss of infants and young adults was heartbreakingly familiar to families of the era.

Angelina's story is not one of public fame or political power. Instead, it reflects the experience of countless nineteenth-century women whose lives centered on family, endurance, hard work, and perseverance. Her legacy lives not in monuments or headlines, but in the generations of descendants who followed.

Final Thoughts

Traditional genealogy reports are invaluable for preserving facts, sources, and research conclusions—but they are not always the easiest format for family members to read.

One of the things I appreciate about the ABC Biography process is how it helps bridge that gap, transforming documented research into a more readable narrative while still honoring the historical record.

Angelina's story is just the first part of this project. In future posts, I'll share a musical interpretation of her life story along with additional AI-generated perspectives using Google Notebook LM.

For now, though, I hope you enjoy getting to know Angelina Jane Burke Currey a little better.

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
May 31, 2026
Uncategorized
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/05/31/saturday-night-genealogy-fun-200/

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun — Memories of the Bicentennial — 4 July 1976

Calling all Genea-Musings Fans:

It's Saturday Night again —

time for some more Genealogy Fun!!

Here is your assignment if you choose to play along (cue the *Mission Impossible* music, please!):

1. How did you observe or celebrate the Bicentennial of America's Founding on 4 July 1976?
2. What were you doing on that day? Did you or your family attend any special events to mark America's 200th birthday?

Unfortunately, I don't specifically remember how my family celebrated the Fourth of July in 1976. What I do remember from that summer, however, was a unique event that brought our community together.

Seneca, Kansas, was one of the stops on the 1976 Olympic Torch Relay as the flame made its way across the United States on its journey to the Summer Olympics in Montreal. In keeping with the region's history, the torch was carried across northeast Kansas by Pony Express riders on horseback.

I remember the community gathering at the football stadium to await the arrival of the torch. As the rider entered town, carrying the Olympic flame, there was a sense of excitement and anticipation. When the torch reached the stadium, it was handed to the mayor, who carried it around the track while spectators watched. Following a brief ceremony, another Pony Express rider mounted up and carried the torch eastward toward its next destination.

The relay entered Kansas near Hollenberg and followed portions of the historic Pony Express route through Hanover, Marysville, Seneca, and Horton before continuing into Missouri. The Kansas portion of the relay covered approximately 164 miles and highlighted an important chapter of the state's transportation history.

Looking back, it seems fitting that this event occurred during America's Bicentennial year. The combination of the Olympic spirit, local pride, and the historic Pony Express route created a memorable celebration of both community heritage and national history.

Today, one of the Olympic torches from the 1976 relay is preserved and displayed at the Nemaha County Historical Society Museum. It serves as a reminder of the summer when the Olympic flame passed through our small Kansas town and gave local residents a chance

to participate in a unique moment of history.

Do you have memories of the Bicentennial year? I'd love to hear how you and your family celebrated America's 200th birthday.

Monday's Diggings

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 1, 2026
Massachusetts,Wells
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/01/mondays-diggings-34/

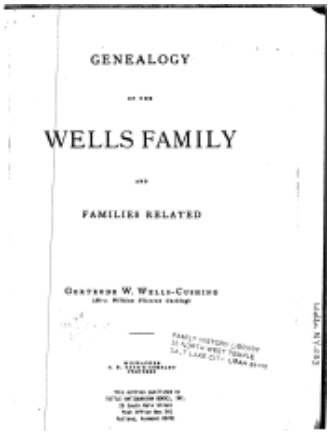
When the Right Surname Leads to the Wrong Family

Genealogists accumulate interesting things in their files.

Sometimes those treasures are exactly what we need.

And sometimes… they are not.

While digging through one of my Wells folders recently, I found a photocopy from *Genealogy of the Wells Family and Families Related* by Gertrude W. Wells-Cushing. The copied pages focus on **Thomas Wells of England and Ipswich, Massachusetts**, beginning with a discussion of the Wells family's English origins and continuing with descendants of Deacon Thomas Wells and his wife Abigail Warner.


GENEALOGY

OF THE

WELLS FAMILY

AND

FAMILIES RELATED

GERTRUDE W. WELLS-CUSHING

At some point in the past, I clearly thought this might relate to my Wells line. Why else would I have spent money making photocopies?

Today, of course, the original book is readily available online, but when this photocopy was made, access to genealogy books often required a trip to a library, correspondence with another researcher, or time at a Family History Center feeding coins into a copier.

So why did I copy it?

Probably because I was chasing a Wells ancestor named Thomas.

That sounds familiar, doesn't it?

The Problem with Common Names

My Wells line also goes back to a Thomas Wells—or more accurately, **Thomas Welles Sr.**

According to my current research, my line is:

Thomas Welles Sr. (1626–before 1700), husband of Naomi Marshall
→ Thomas Wells Jr.
→ Thomas Wells
→ Nathaniel Wells
→ Green Wells
…and onward.

At first glance, that makes the Wells-Cushing book seem promising.

But a closer look quickly shows that this is not my family.

The photocopied pages identify their Thomas Wells as:

- **Thomas Wells of Ipswich, Massachusetts**
- married **Abigail Warner**
- children including **Nathaniel, John, Sarah, Abigail, Thomas, Elizabeth, Hannah, and Lydia**
- probable origins in **Colchester, Essex, England**

My Thomas, however:

- married **Naomi Marshall**
- died in **Westerly, Rhode Island**
- had son **Thomas Wells Jr. (born 1661 in Ipswich, died Westerly)**

Same surname.

Same general time period.

Even some overlapping geography.

But not the same family.

What This Photocopy Taught Me

Years ago, I might have tossed this aside as irrelevant.

Now I see it differently.

Negative evidence matters.

Knowing that this **isn't** my Wells family helps prevent me from going down the wrong path in the future.

It also serves as a reminder of how easy it is to attach ourselves to the wrong ancestor when dealing with:

- common surnames
- recurring given names
- colonial New England families
- incomplete early records

And honestly?

It reminds me how my genealogy methods have changed.

Once upon a time, I copied anything that *might* be useful.

Now I try to document **why** something belongs—or doesn't belong—to my family.

A Future Research Question

One detail still catches my eye.

My Thomas Welles Sr. is said to have been born in **Colchester, Essex, England**, the same general area mentioned in the Wells-Cushing book.

Coincidence?

Possibly.

Evidence of a broader Wells/Welles connection?

Maybe.

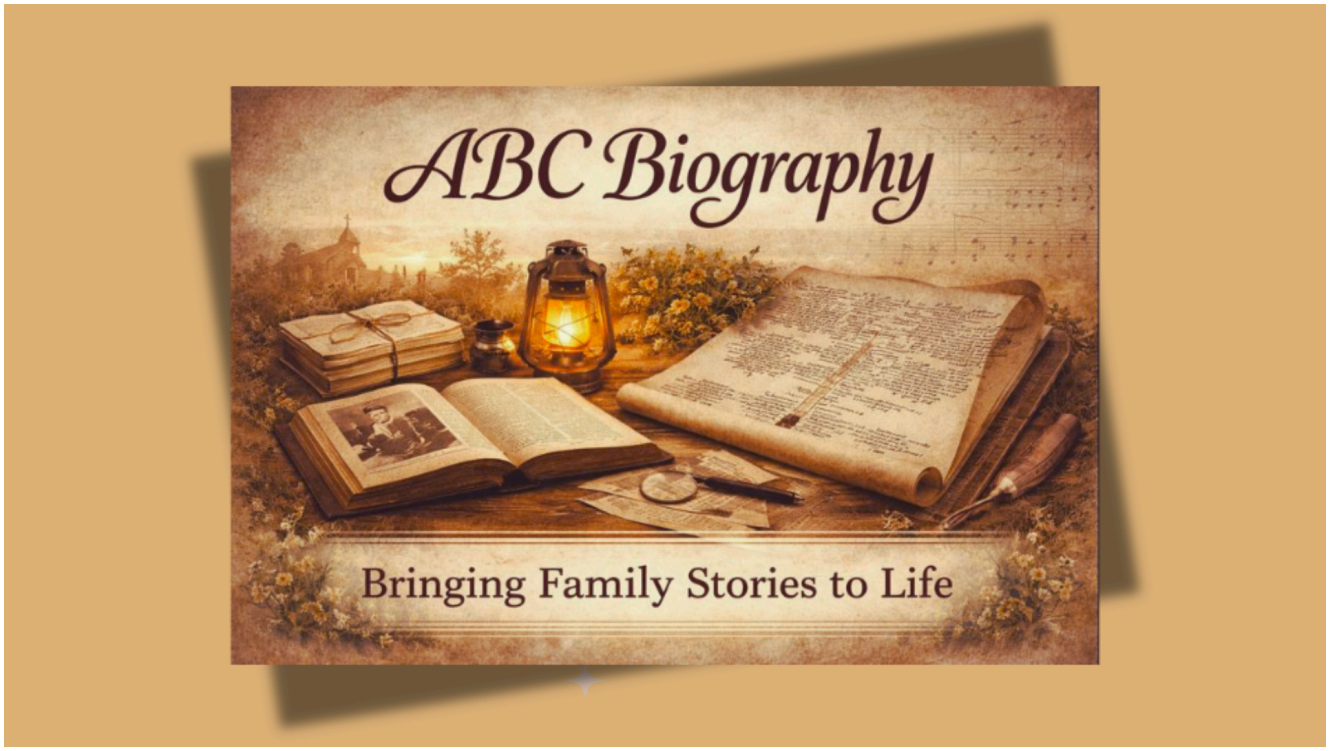
But "maybe" is not proof.

For now, this photocopy remains in my files—not as proof of ancestry, but as a reminder to keep asking better questions.

Have you ever rediscovered something in your files that turned out to belong to an entirely different family?

Angelina's Song

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 2, 2026
ABC Biography,Burke,Currey,Leavenworth County
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/02/angelinas-song/



Bringing Angelina Jane Burke Currey's Story to Life Through Music

As part of my ongoing **ABC Biography** series—an approach inspired by Randy Seaver of *Genea-Musings*—I'm experimenting with artificial intelligence tools to tell family stories in creative ways.

In this series, I'm treating the three parts of the ABC process as separate projects:

- **A** – a narrative biography based on documented genealogical research
- **B** – a song inspired by the ancestor's life story
- **C** – AI-generated interpretations such as audio overviews, infographics, and cinematic videos

This post focuses on the musical side of the project.

After researching and writing about **Angelina Jane Burke Currey (1836–1901)**, I wanted to see whether her life story could be transformed into music.

Angelina's life seems especially suited to a ballad.

Born in Kentucky in 1836, Angelina came of age as America pushed westward. She married **Hiram M. Currey** in Missouri in 1856 and soon established a home in Kansas during one of the most turbulent periods in frontier history. She lived through the *Bleeding Kansas* era, the Civil War, railroad expansion, economic uncertainty, and the realities of raising a large family in nineteenth-century America.

That kind of story feels less like a modern pop song and more like something that might have been sung around a parlor piano or shared as a frontier ballad.

To create the song, I first used AI to write lyrics based on Angelina's documented life story.

I then took those lyrics to **Suno.com**, using the prompt:

Ballad in a style similar to the 1860 to 1880s

Since no photograph of Angelina has survived in my collection, I used AI to create a historically inspired image representing the world she knew—without attempting to invent her likeness.

Using that image along with the audio created by Suno, I assembled a video in **Canva** and uploaded it to YouTube so it could be easily shared.

The result is below.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=L00Kgu3KzpY

I'll admit that creating songs about ancestors still feels a little magical.

Genealogy traditionally gives us names, dates, places, and documents. Music adds something different—a sense of emotion, movement, and storytelling that may connect with family members who would never sit down to read a narrative report.

Is it historically perfect? Of course not.

But as a creative way to honor an ancestor's life and spark interest in family history, I think it works surprisingly well.

And honestly? It's fun.

If you missed the earlier biography post about Angelina, that was the "A" portion of this project. I'll be sharing the "C" portion—Google Notebook LM interpretations—in a future post.

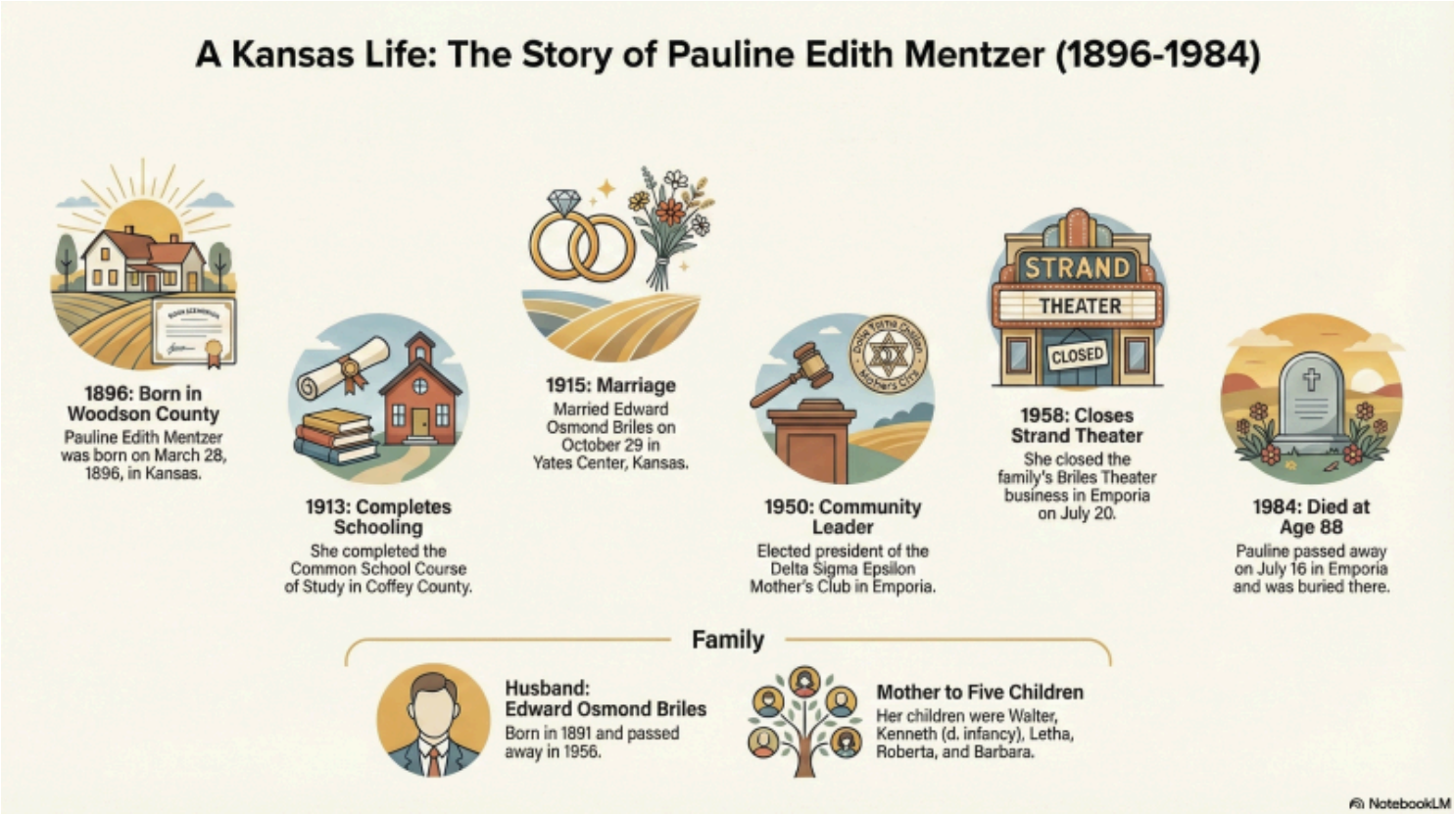
For now, I hope you enjoy Angelina's song.

Getting Better Historical Infographics from Google Notebook LM

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 3, 2026
Artificial Intelligence,Burke,Currey
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/03/infographics/

Do you use Google Notebook LM to create infographics? Have you noticed a change in the colors and style used When I first started using **Google Notebook LM** to create genealogy-related infographics, the process was wonderfully simple. I uploaded a PDF copy of a narrative report about an ancestor, clicked the **Infographic** button, and let Notebook LM do its thing.

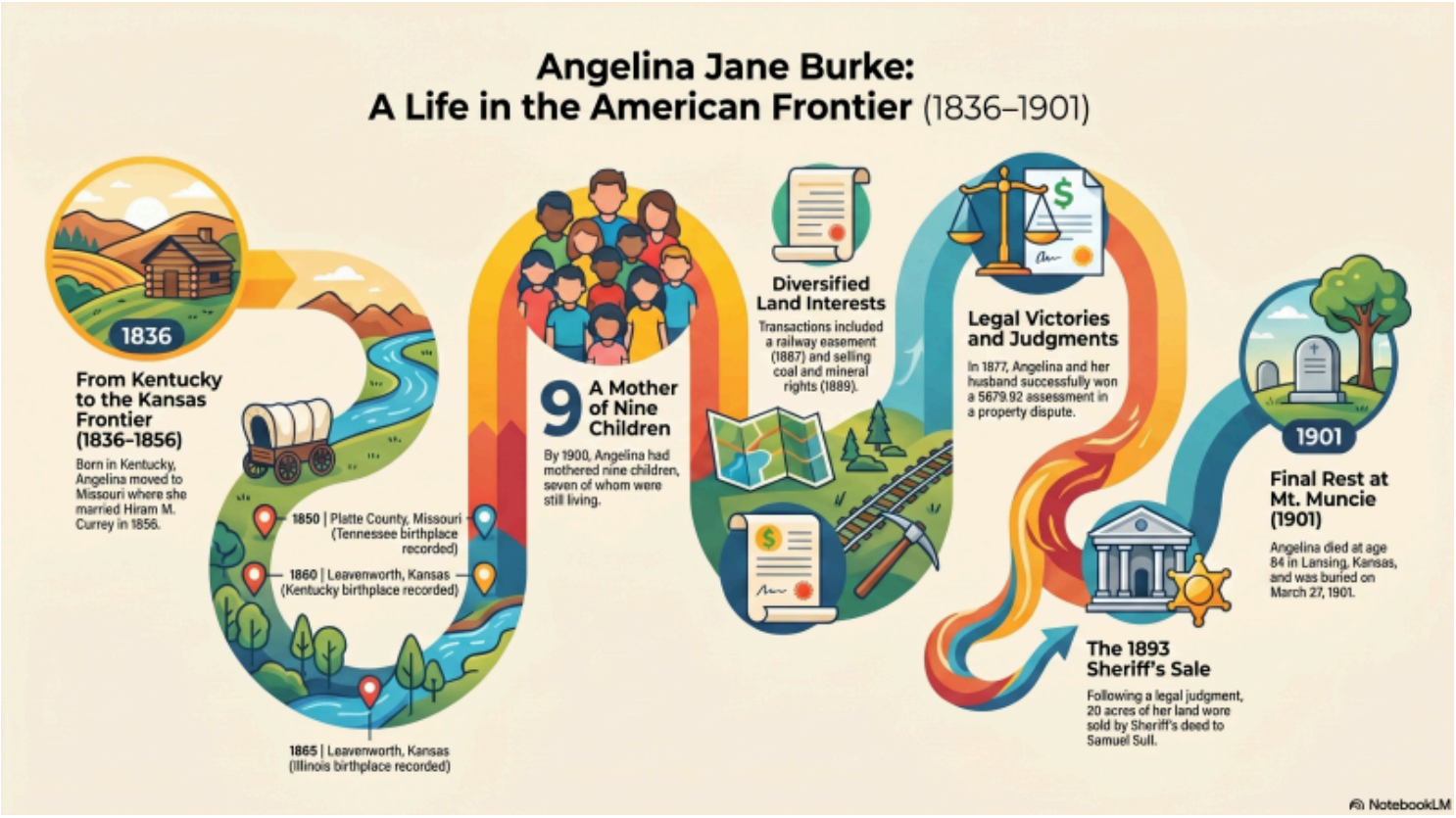
One of those early efforts was an infographic about my grandmother, **Pauline Mentzer Briles**, whose life spanned much of the twentieth century.


A Kansas Life: The Story of Pauline Edith Mentzer (1896-1984)
1896: Born in Woodson County
Pauline Edith Mentzer was born on March 28, 1896, in Kansas.
1913: Completes Schooling
She completed the Common School Course of Study in Coffey County.
1915: Marriage
Married Edward Osmond Briles on October 29 in Yates Center, Kansas.
1950: Community Leader
Elected president of the Delta Sigma Epsilon Mother's Club in Emporia.
STRAND
THEATER
CLOSED
1958: Closes Strand Theater
She closed the family's Briles Theater business in Emporia on July 20.
1984: Died at Age 88
Pauline passed away on July 16 in Emporia and was buried there.
Family
Husband: Edward Osmond Briles
Born in 1891 and passed away in 1956.
Mother to Five Children
Her children were Walter, Kenneth (d. infancy), Letha, Roberta, and Barbara.
NotebookLM

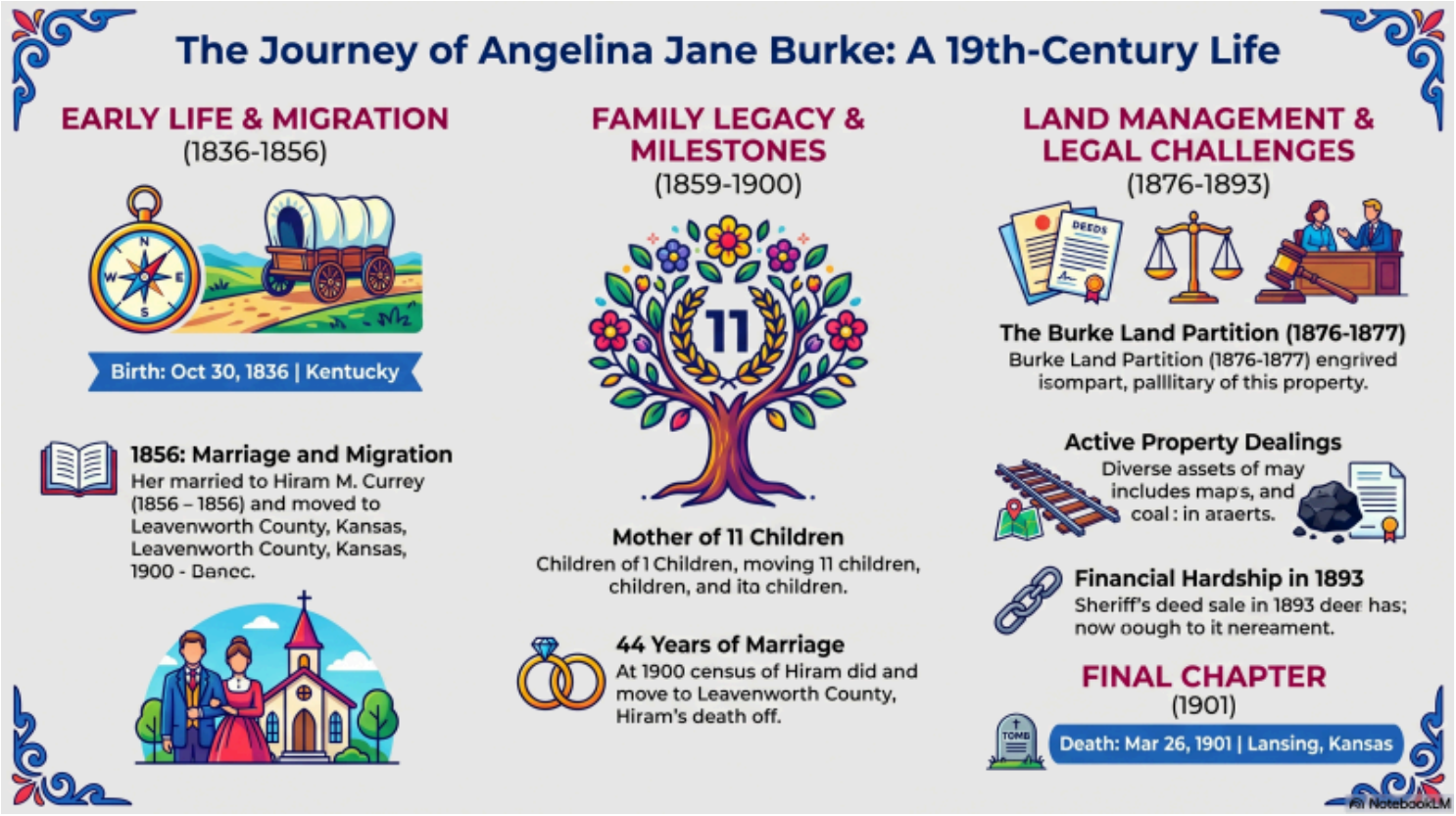
For a twentieth-century subject, the modern infographic styling worked reasonably well.

Recently, however, I noticed that Notebook LM seemed to favor a much more contemporary design aesthetic—even when the ancestor lived in the nineteenth century.

When I created an infographic for **Angelina Jane Burke Currey (1836–1901)**, the result looked sleek, modern, and more appropriate for a corporate presentation than a frontier-era ancestor.


Angelina Jane Burke:
A Life in the American Frontier (1836–1901)
1836
From Kentucky to the Kansas Frontier (1836–1856)
Born in Kentucky, Angelina moved to Missouri where she married Hiram M. Currey in 1856.
1850 | Platte County, Missouri (Tennessee birthplace recorded)
1860 | Leavenworth, Kansas (Kentucky birthplace recorded)
1865 | Leavenworth, Kansas (Illinois birthplace recorded)
9 A Mother of Nine Children
By 1900, Angelina had mothered nine children, seven of whom were still living.
Diversified Land Interests
Transactions included a railway easement (1887) and selling coal and mineral rights (1889).
Legal Victories and Judgments
In 1877, Angelina and her husband successfully won a $679.92 assessment in a property dispute.
The 1893 Sheriff's Sale
Following a legal judgment, 20 acres of her land were sold by Sheriff's deed to Samuel Sull.
1901
Final Rest at Mt. Muncie (1901)
Angelina died at age 84 in Lansing, Kansas, and was buried on March 27, 1901.
NotebookLM

A second attempt produced something a little softer, with more muted blues and reds, but it still didn't feel historically appropriate.


The Journey of Angelina Jane Burke: A 19th-Century Life
EARLY LIFE & MIGRATION
(1836-1856)
Birth: Oct 30, 1836 | Kentucky
1856: Marriage and Migration
Her married to Hiram M. Currey (1856 – 1856) and moved to Leavenworth County, Kansas, Leavenworth County, Kansas, 1900 - Dancc.
FAMILY LEGACY & MILESTONES
(1859-1900)
11
Mother of 11 Children
Children of 1 Children, moving 11 children, children, and ita children.
44 Years of Marriage
At 1900 census of Hiram did and move to Leavenworth County, Hiram's death off.
LAND MANAGEMENT & LEGAL CHALLENGES
(1876-1893)
DEEDS
The Burke Land Partition (1876-1877)
Burke Land Partition (1876-1877) engrived isompart, palllitary of this property.
Active Property Dealings
Diverse assets of may includes maps, and coal : in araerts.
Financial Hardship in 1893
Sheriff's deed sale in 1893 deer has; now oough to it nereament.
FINAL CHAPTER
(1901)
TOMB
Death: Mar 26, 1901 | Lansing, Kansas
NotebookLM

Since Angelina lived during the frontier and late Victorian era, I wanted something that better reflected her time period.

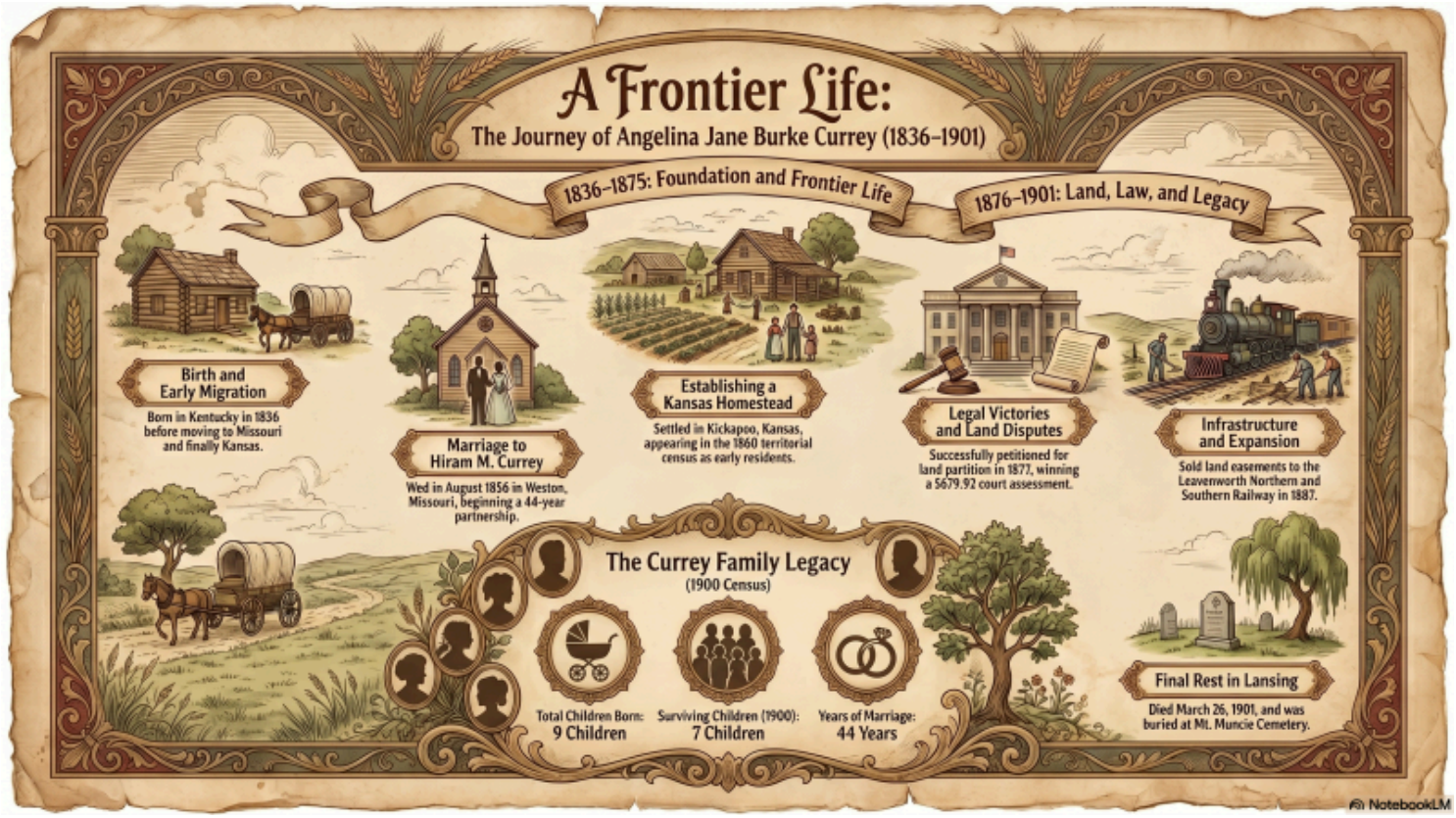
After discussing the issue with ChatGPT, I realized that I had been relying entirely on Notebook LM's default design assumptions. Instead of simply clicking the Infographic button, I tried giving Notebook LM a more specific prompt:

> *Create a historical infographic about Angelina Jane Burke Currey in a frontier Kansas / late Victorian aesthetic, using aged paper textures, muted earth tones, antique typography, and period-inspired decorative borders. Avoid modern neon or corporate infographic colors.*

That made a remarkable difference.

Using that prompt, Google Notebook LM generated two much more historically appropriate infographics.

ANGELINA JANE BURKE CURREY
A Life on the Kansas Frontier (1836–1901)
1836–1856: Roots and Marriage
Birth in Kentucky
Born October 30, 1836
Childhood in Missouri
1850 Census in Platte County
Marriage to Hiram M. Currey
Wed on August 3, 1836
1860–1875: The Kansas Frontier
Settlement in Kansas
The Expanding Household
Life in Leavenworth County
The First Major Land Sale
1876–1893: Land Partitions and Legal Transactions
May 1876 Petition for Partition
Court Victory against Milton E. Burke
Diversifying Land Interests
July 1893 Sheriff's Deed
The Currey Family Lineage
1901: Final Rest
Passing of a Pioneer
Buried March 27, 1901
Angelina & Hiram
NotebookLM


A Frontier Life:
The Journey of Angelina Jane Burke Currey (1836–1901)
1836–1875: Foundation and Frontier Life
1876–1901: Land, Law, and Legacy
Birth and Early Migration
Born in Kentucky in 1836 before moving to Missouri and finally Kansas.
Marriage to Hiram M. Currey
Wed in August 1856 in Weston, Missouri, beginning a 44-year partnership.
Establishing a Kansas Homestead
Settled in Kickapoo, Kansas, appearing in the 1860 territorial census as early residents.
Legal Victories and Land Disputes
Successfully petitioned for land partition in 1877, winning a 5679.92 court assessment.
Infrastructure and Expansion
Sold land easements to the Leavenworth Northern and Southern Railway in 1887.
The Currey Family Legacy
(1900 Census)
Total Children Born: 9 Children
Surviving Children (1900): 7 Children
Years of Marriage: 44 Years
Final Rest in Lansing
Died March 26, 1901, and was buried at Mt. Muncie Cemetery.
NotebookLM

Both versions felt far more in keeping with Angelina's lifetime.

Because I planned to use the infographic as part of a video project—pairing it with an audio file created for the "C" portion of my ABC Biography workflow—I preferred the **horizontal version**, since it fits video formatting much better.

The experience reminded me that AI tools often make assumptions based on default modern design conventions unless we provide clearer direction.

The lesson?

If you're creating infographics for historical ancestors, especially those from earlier centuries, don't just accept the default output. Tell the AI what historical mood, style, and color palette you want.

A little prompt engineering can make a big difference.

Have you experimented with Notebook LM infographics for genealogy? If so, have you noticed similar styling shifts?

When Google Notebook LM Gets the Visuals Wrong

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 4, 2026
Artificial Intelligence,Burke,Currey,Google Notebook LM
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/04/google/

Have you experimented with the relatively new **video creation feature in Google Notebook LM**?

When this feature first appeared, I immediately gravitated toward the **cinematic video** option. The results were visually engaging, and I found them to be an interesting way to reinterpret genealogical research.

So naturally, when I created an ABC Biography project for **Angelina Jane Burke Currey**, I decided to try the cinematic format using her RootsMagic narrative report as the source.

At first glance, the results seemed impressive.

The **audio narration was excellent**—engaging, well-paced, and an enjoyable retelling of Angelina's story.

But then I noticed a problem.

While discussing Angelina's birth in **Kentucky**, the accompanying visuals displayed an image associated with **Posey County, Indiana**.

That immediately raised a red flag.

I have found no evidence placing Angelina or her family in Posey County, Indiana. Including that image unintentionally introduces false information into the story. A viewer unfamiliar with the research could easily assume the location was relevant to Angelina's life.

That's one of the challenges with AI-generated visual storytelling. Even when the narration is grounded in your source material, the visuals may be selected through association rather than genealogical accuracy.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=CapR2oEdHUU

Thinking I could fix the issue, I tried creating a more detailed prompt to guide the visuals.

Unfortunately, that attempt introduced *even more* visual discrepancies.

Instead of improving the accuracy, the additional prompting seemed to send Notebook LM in less predictable directions.

At that point, I tried a different approach.

Rather than choosing the cinematic option, I selected the **explainer video** format.

To my surprise, the explainer version worked much better.

The visuals were simpler, but they aligned far more closely with Angelina's actual story and did not introduce obvious factual errors.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=xvD1Uwa1T9o

This experience was a useful reminder that AI-generated content still requires human review—especially in genealogy.

The narration may sound authoritative. The visuals may look convincing. But "convincing" and "correct" are not always the same thing.

For storytelling, the cinematic videos are certainly attractive.

For genealogical accuracy?

At least in this case, the explainer video proved to be the better choice.

Have you experimented with Notebook LM's video features? If so, have you found the cinematic version accurate—or creatively adventurous?

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 5, 2026
California,Crawford
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/05/friday-find-119/

Ordering a Social Security Application from the SSA

Genealogists today are accustomed to finding records with a few clicks—census records, draft registrations, newspaper articles, and even cemetery images. But not that many years ago, obtaining some records required a different approach: identifying the record, writing a letter, mailing payment, and waiting for the response.

Today's Friday Find is a reminder of that earlier process.

Recently, while sorting through my CRAWFORD files, I came across correspondence from the Social Security Administration dated **6 February 2001**. The letter enclosed a copy of the original application for a Social Security number—better known to genealogists as the **SS-5**—for **Percy Ernest Crawford (1893–1978)**.

Percy wasn't a direct ancestor, but he was certainly family: my **second cousin twice removed**. Percy was the son of **William M. Crawford and Katie Kreigh**, grandson of **James H. Crawford**, and great-grandson of **Nelson G. Crawford**, our shared ancestor.

At the time, I likely identified Percy using the **Social Security Death Index**, probably through Ancestry, then submitted a request to the Social Security Administration for a copy of his original application. Unfortunately, I no longer have a copy of the request letter itself—but the SSA's response survived.

The cover letter reads in part:

> "I am enclosing a copy of the original application for a Social Security number for the above individual, as requested."

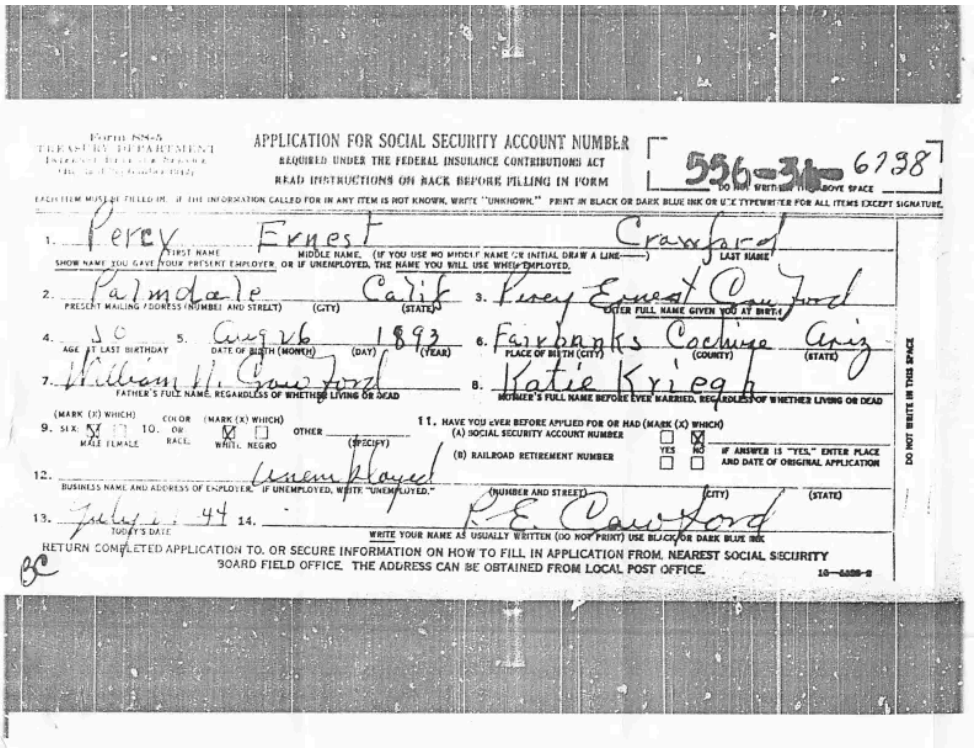
That enclosed application provided exactly the kind of genealogical clues we love to find.

What the SS-5 Revealed

Percy's application tells us:

- **Full name:** Percy Ernest Crawford
- **Date of birth:** 18 August 1893
- **Place of birth:** Fairbank, Cochise County, Arizona

- **Father:** William H. Crawford
- **Mother:** Kate Kriegh
- **Residence in 1944:** Palmdale, California
- **Employment status:** Unemployed
- **Date of application:** 1 July 1944



Form SS-5
TREASURY DEPARTMENT

APPLICATION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBER
REQUIRED UNDER THE FEDERAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS ACT
READ INSTRUCTIONS ON BACK BEFORE FILLING IN FORM

556-36-6738
DO NOT WRITE IN THE SPACE ABOVE

EACH ITEM MUST BE FILLED IN. IF THE INFORMATION CALLED FOR IN ANY ITEM IS NOT KNOWN, WRITE "UNKNOWN." PRINT IN BLACK OR DARK BLUE INK OR USE TYPEWRITER FOR ALL ITEMS EXCEPT SIGNATURE.

1. Percy (FIRST NAME) Ernest (MIDDLE NAME. IF YOU USE NO MIDDLE NAME OR INITIAL DRAW A LINE) Crawford (LAST NAME)
SHOW NAME YOU GAVE YOUR PRESENT EMPLOYER, OR IF UNEMPLOYED, THE NAME YOU WILL USE WHEN EMPLOYED.
2. Palmdale (PRESENT MAILING ADDRESS (NUMBER AND STREET)) Calif (CITY) (STATE) 3. Percy Ernest Crawford (ENTER FULL NAME GIVEN YOU AT BIRTH)
4. 50 (AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY) 5. Aug 26 (DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH)) 1893 (DAY) (YEAR) 6. Fairbanks Cochise Ariz (PLACE OF BIRTH (CITY) (COUNTY) (STATE))
7. William H. Crawford (FATHER'S FULL NAME, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER LIVING OR DEAD) 8. Katie Kriegh (MOTHER'S FULL NAME BEFORE EVER MARRIED, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER LIVING OR DEAD)
9. SEX (MARK (X) WHICH) X MALE ☐ FEMALE 10. COLOR OR RACE (MARK (X) WHICH) X WHITE ☐ NEGRO OTHER ____ (SPECIFY)
11. HAVE YOU EVER BEFORE APPLIED FOR OR HAD (MARK (X) WHICH)
(A) SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBER ☐ YES ☒ NO
(B) RAILROAD RETIREMENT NUMBER ☐ YES ☐ NO
IF ANSWER IS "YES," ENTER PLACE AND DATE OF ORIGINAL APPLICATION
12. Unemployed (BUSINESS NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER. IF UNEMPLOYED, WRITE "UNEMPLOYED.") (NUMBER AND STREET) (CITY) (STATE)
13. July 1 44 (TODAY'S DATE) 14. P E Crawford (WRITE YOUR NAME AS USUALLY WRITTEN (DO NOT PRINT) USE BLACK OR DARK BLUE INK)
RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION TO, OR SECURE INFORMATION ON HOW TO FILL IN APPLICATION FROM, NEAREST SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD FIELD OFFICE. THE ADDRESS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM LOCAL POST OFFICE.
BC
DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE

For a genealogist, that's a remarkable collection of information in a single document.

The birthplace helps place Percy's family in Arizona at a specific time. The parental names help confirm family relationships. And even the application date and residence provide a snapshot of Percy's life during World War II.

A Different Era of Genealogical Research

Younger genealogists may not realize how many records once required a paper request.

Before widespread digitization, tracking down a document often meant:

1. Finding enough identifying information in an index
2. Writing a formal request
3. Sending a check
4. Waiting weeks—or months—for a response

There was always a little anticipation when that envelope finally arrived.

In Percy's case, the wait was worth it.

Friday Find Reflection

This document is also a reminder to preserve our research trail.

I saved the SSA response and the copied application—but not the original request letter. Today, I wish I had kept that too, if only as a snapshot of my own genealogy methods in 2001.

Have you ever found evidence of your earlier research methods tucked into your files—old correspondence, photocopied record requests, handwritten pedigree charts, or letters from repositories?

Sometimes the "find" isn't just the ancestor.

Sometimes it's the researcher we used to be.

Bringing Angelina Jane Burke Currey's Story to Life with Google Notebook LM and Canva

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 6, 2026
Artificial Intelligence,Currey,Google Notebook LM
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/06/notebook/

As part of my ongoing exploration of artificial intelligence tools for genealogy storytelling, I've been experimenting with ways to transform traditional genealogical research into formats that may be more engaging for family members.

For **Angelina Jane Burke Currey (1836–1901)**, that journey has included an AI-assisted biography, a frontier-inspired song, infographic experimentation, and testing Google Notebook LM's video creation tools.

This post highlights yet another variation: combining AI-generated content into a shareable video presentation.

For this project, I began with **Angelina's RootsMagic narrative report**, which I uploaded to **Google Notebook LM**.

From that source material, Notebook LM generated two pieces of content that worked especially well:

- an **audio overview** summarizing Angelina's life story
- a **historically styled infographic** (after some prompt engineering to avoid modern corporate design aesthetics!)

Rather than using Notebook LM's built-in video creation tools, I decided to combine these two elements myself.

Using **Canva**, I paired the audio overview with the infographic to create a video presentation that visually complements the narration. Once completed, I uploaded the finished project to **YouTube** so it could be easily shared and embedded here.

The result is a concise multimedia overview of Angelina's life—from her Kentucky birth, through frontier Kansas family life, to the legacy she left behind.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=cpvDDjR_ZoA

One of the things I enjoy about these experiments is seeing how different AI tools can complement one another.

Notebook LM did an excellent job generating the narrative audio summary.

Canva provided the flexibility to assemble the pieces into a format that felt visually cohesive.

YouTube made sharing simple.

None of these tools replaces sound genealogical research, of course. The underlying story still depends entirely on documented records, analysis, and careful fact-checking.

But they do offer creative ways to present family history in formats that may appeal to descendants who might never read a traditional narrative report.

For me, that's part of the fun of exploring AI in genealogy—not replacing the research, but finding new ways to tell the story.

Angelina's life was lived in the nineteenth century, but modern tools give us interesting new ways to preserve and share her story.

Have you experimented with combining genealogy research with AI-generated multimedia? I'd love to hear what tools you're using.

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 7, 2026
Briles,Coffey County Kansas,Kansas,SaturdayNightGenealogyFun
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/07/saturday-night-genealogy-fun-201/

Calling all Genea-Musings Fans:

It's **Saturday Night** again —

time for some more **Genealogy Fun!!**

Here is your assignment if you choose to play along (cue the *Mission Impossible* music, please!):

1. The life of every person has events and decisions that carry a risk factor and can significantly affect their future.
2. Describe a risk that one of your ancestors took. How did it affect their life, and how did it all turn out?

For my example, I'm looking at my 3rd great-grandfather, **Alexander Briles**.

In 1850, Alexander and his wife, **Sarah Rush Briles**, were living in Randolph County, North Carolina, with six children. They had established a farm on the Little Caraway Creek and appeared to have a stable life. Then, in 1857, Alexander made a decision that would change the future of his family for generations: he sold his North Carolina land and headed west.

By March 1858, Alexander was living in Neosho Township, Coffey County, Kansas Territory, where he claimed a homestead and began building a new life on the frontier.

This move involved significant risks:

- It separated Alexander and Sarah from the network of relatives and neighbors they had known in North Carolina.
- It reduced their land holdings from approximately 240 acres in North Carolina to a 160-acre homestead claim in Kansas.
- It placed the family in a territory that was still being settled and had recently experienced the political and sometimes violent conflicts associated with "Bleeding Kansas."
- It required the family to travel hundreds of miles and start over in a region with few established services, roads, and communities.

Despite those risks, the decision proved to be a successful one. The Briles family established deep roots in Coffey County, and the homestead remained in the family for generations. In fact, the original homestead is still owned by one of Alexander's descendants today.

Looking back, Alexander’s choice to leave the familiar surroundings of North Carolina for the uncertainties of the Kansas frontier was a gamble. Had the move failed, the story of the Briles family might have been very different. Instead, his willingness to take that risk helped shape the future of his descendants and created a lasting family legacy on the Kansas prairie.

Monday Diggings

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 8, 2026
Uncategorized
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/08/monday-diggings-6/

Following a Wells Family Tombstone Trail in Genesee County, New York

One of the realities of genealogy is that not every discovery leads to your own family.

Sometimes the real value lies in following the clue far enough to determine that it belongs to someone else.

This week's Monday's Diggings began with a search for **WELLS family records in Genesee County, New York**. Since my Wells family spent time in New York before migrating west, I'm always interested in records that mention the surname.

That search led me to *Tombstone Inscriptions from the Abandoned Cemeteries and Farm Burials of Genesee County*, compiled by **LaVerne C. Cooley** in 1952 and available digitally through the FamilySearch Digital Library.

A quick check of the surname index revealed several Wells entries.

Transit Road Cemetery

The first Wells entries were found in the **Transit Road Cemetery**:

- **Ebenezer Wells**, died 3 September 1852, aged 69 years
- **Rachael Wells**, wife of E. Wells, died 6 January 1832, aged 50 years
- **Seymour Wells**, died 28 October 1860, aged 47 years
- **Harriet S. Wells**, wife of Seymour Wells, died 4 October 1878, aged 59 years
- **Ellen E. Wells**, daughter of Seymour and Harriet Wells, died 24 February 1848, aged 5 years

At first glance, this looked like a likely family group. The names and relationships suggested a straightforward cluster:

Ebenezer Wells and wife Rachel
their son Seymour Wells
his wife Harriet
and daughter Ellen

But was this my Wells family?

Testing the Hypothesis

Rather than speculate, I turned to FamilySearch.

There I found **Ebenezer Wells (FamilySearch ID: LYPZ-6BG)**, whose family aligns closely with the Transit Road Cemetery entries.

The FamilySearch tree identifies:

- **Ebenezer Wells**
- wife **Rachel Seymour Wells**
- son **Seymour Wells**
- Seymour's wife **Harriet Shelden**
- daughter **Ellen E. Wells**

The tombstone transcription and FamilySearch tree align remarkably well. The death dates for Ebenezer, Rachel, Seymour, and Harriet match the tombstone book.

The only discrepancy is Ellen, whose death date is given differently in FamilySearch.

That was enough to establish that these individuals represent a documented Wells family—but not mine.

A Second Wells Entry

Another Wells entry appeared in the **Brick House Cemetery**:

- **Freddie Wells**, son of F. H. and S. A. Wells, died 2 September 1864, aged 3 years, 11 months, 22 days

This appears to be an entirely separate Wells family.

Why This Still Matters

It would be easy to dismiss this as a dead end.

But negative findings are part of genealogy, too.

The surname alone made these entries worth exploring. A few minutes of follow-up research helped place the people in an identified family and kept me from incorrectly attaching them to my own Wells line.

That's productive digging.

Sometimes Monday's Diggings uncovers an exciting breakthrough.

Sometimes it helps eliminate a possibility.

Both move the research forward.

Sharing a Genealogy Treasure

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 9, 2026
Ancestry,FamilySearch,WikiTree
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/09/sharing-2/

Last week's Friday Find featured a document I obtained years ago from the Social Security Administration: the original **SS-5 application for Percy Ernest Crawford (1893–1978)**.

That application provided exactly the kind of details genealogists love to uncover—Percy's full name, birth date, birthplace, parents' names, residence, and even his employment status at the time he applied for a Social Security number.

But finding a document is only part of the genealogical process.

The next step is making sure that document is available to others researching the same family.

As genealogists, many of us have files tucked away in notebooks, filing cabinets, hard drives, and computer folders—records we gathered years ago for a specific research question. Those documents may contain clues that could help cousins, descendants, or other researchers, but if they stay in our private files, they remain effectively hidden.

That thought prompted me to do something with Percy's SS-5 application beyond simply writing about it.

Sharing the Document

Since Percy Ernest Crawford is collateral kin rather than a direct ancestor, it would have been easy to leave this document filed away in my Crawford folder. Instead, I decided to share it in the places where other Crawford researchers are most likely to find it.

Ancestry

The first stop was my public Ancestry tree, **Heartland Genealogy**, where Percy already has a profile.

I uploaded the SS-5 application to Percy's gallery so anyone viewing his profile can see the actual document.

Too often, documents are mentioned in citations but not made visible. When possible, I like giving other researchers the chance to view the original image for themselves.

WikiTree

Next, I uploaded the document to Percy's profile on WikiTree (**Crawford-7164**) as a source image.

WikiTree's collaborative environment makes document sharing especially valuable. A record like this may help another researcher confirm relationships, correct details, or build out Percy's profile further.

FamilySearch

Finally, I uploaded the document to the **Memories** section of Percy's FamilySearch profile (**L6R3-KG5**).

FamilySearch's Memories section can be an excellent place for preserving documents, especially for researchers who may not use Ancestry or WikiTree.

By placing the record in multiple locations, I increase the chances that someone researching Percy—or the broader Crawford family—will find it.

Why This Matters

Genealogy is often described as detective work, and that's true.

But it's also community work.

Many of the discoveries we make are built on records indexed by volunteers, databases created by organizations, and documents preserved by archives. Sharing our own findings helps continue that cycle.

That SS-5 application sat quietly in my files for years.

Now it has the potential to help someone else.

And perhaps that's one of the most satisfying parts of genealogy—not just discovering family history, but making those discoveries accessible to others.

Friday Find Reflection

Do you have documents in your files that could help another researcher?

An old letter? A courthouse photocopy? A pension file? A family Bible page?

If so, perhaps this is your reminder to share them.

Because genealogy treasures do little good when only one person knows they exist.

When a Will Became a Court Battle — The Probate of Aaron Hutchinson

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 10, 2026
Hutchinson,New York
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/10/will/

Old probate records often contain much more than a simple distribution of property. Sometimes they preserve family tensions, medical testimony, and details about relationships that would otherwise be lost to history.

That was certainly the case when I recently revisited a transcription in my files concerning the probate of **Aaron Hutchinson of Caledonia, Livingston County, New York**.

> "Livingston, New York, United States records," images, FamilySearch (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9YCH-4CQ?view=explore : May 18, 2026), image 300 of 676; New York. County Court (Livingston County). Image Group Number: 005114902

At first glance, this appeared to be a straightforward will. Instead, it turned out to be a fascinating probate dispute that reveals not only Aaron's wishes, but also family dynamics, health concerns, and clues to the next generation.

The Will

Aaron Hutchinson signed his will on **22 May 1833**, declaring himself to be "of sound mind and memory."

His estate plan was simple:

- His farm in Caledonia, New York, went to his three sons:
  - **Hollom Hutchinson**
  - **Aaron Hutchinson**
  - **Lewis Hutchinson**
- All personal property also went to those same sons, with instructions that they pay his debts.

He named Hollom and Aaron as executors.

That sounds straightforward enough—until you notice what is missing.

No provisions were made directly for Aaron's widow.

No daughters were named.

And Aaron apparently had several daughters.

That omission likely explains why the matter ended up in court.

A Probate Contest

The probate hearing took place in Livingston County Surrogate's Court on **20 October 1834**, more than a year after Aaron's death.

A long list of heirs and interested parties were notified, including individuals with the surnames:

- Jackson
- Finch
- Keys
- Stilwell
- Sutliff

These names strongly suggest married daughters or descendants of daughters.

Instead of a simple probate proceeding, the court heard testimony about Aaron's physical and mental condition at the time the will was signed.

Was Aaron Competent?

The key legal question was whether Aaron was mentally capable of making a valid will.

The Witnesses

Two men witnessed the will:

Willard H. Smith and **Elijah Humphreys**.

Both testified that Aaron signed the will and declared it to be his final testament.

But Elijah Humphreys' testimony added nuance.

Aaron was weak.

He needed help.

He took some time to sign his name.

Humphreys even thought someone may have physically helped steady Aaron's hand.

More concerning, Humphreys later saw Aaron the same evening and described him as "stupid," almost as though asleep.

Still, Humphreys admitted that Aaron answered questions rationally.

In modern terms, this witness was not entirely comfortable—but neither was he convinced Aaron lacked capacity.

The Doctor's Opinion

Then came the physician.

Dr. Thomas McPherson had attended Aaron during his final illness.

His testimony was far less favorable.

He believed Aaron was suffering from **apoplexy**—what we would likely interpret today as a stroke or stroke-like event.

When the doctor saw him, Aaron was:

- "stupid"
- "insensible"
- not competent to dispose of property

That testimony would seem devastating.

A Widow Speaks

Then Aaron's widow, **Hannah Hutchinson**, testified.

Her version painted a very different picture.

She said Aaron had been ill for about eighteen months, but on the morning the will was prepared:

- he knew exactly what he wanted,
- asked specifically for Judge Smith,
- and had already considered how his property should be distributed.

According to Hannah:

Aaron intended the **land for the boys**.

The **household goods for the girls**.

That statement suggests the will reflected longstanding plans—not a sudden deathbed decision.

An Earlier Statement

Another witness, **Noah Hutchinson**, added an interesting wrinkle.

He testified that years earlier, before Aaron moved from Chenango County to Livingston County, Aaron had said:

- Lewis should receive half
- the remainder should be divided between Hollom and Aaron

That distribution differed from the final will—but notably, daughters were still absent.

This suggests Aaron may indeed have long intended to favor his sons in distributing land.

The Court's Decision

After hearing the testimony, Surrogate Samuel W. Spencer ruled that:

- the will had been properly executed,
- Aaron was competent,
- and the will should be admitted to probate.

The sons prevailed.

Why This Record Matters

This is exactly why probate files are so valuable.

The will alone tells us only who inherited.

The court case tells us much more:

- Aaron's widow was **Hannah Hutchinson**
- his sons were **Hollom, Aaron, and Lewis**
- he had **multiple daughters**
- at least one daughter had died before him but left descendants
- the family had earlier lived in **Chenango County, New York**
- Aaron suffered from diabetes and a final stroke-like illness
- family members may have contested the estate

Without the probate testimony, many of those details would remain hidden.

A simple will became a much richer family story.

And that's the kind of discovery that makes digging through old records worthwhile.

An Unexpected Hutchinson Family Discovery

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 11, 2026
Hutchinson,New York
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/11/hutchinson/

One of the pleasures of genealogy is finding a record you didn't know existed.

Recently, Ancestry served up a hint for **Cynthia Hutchinson**, sister of my probable ancestor **Albert Hutchinson**. Normally, I approach compiled family histories with caution, but this one immediately caught my attention because it centered on **Aaron Hutchinson (1767–1833)** and his descendants.

My ancestor **Albert Hutchinson**, husband of **Julia Harding**, has long been a frustrating research problem. Based on census records and family connections, I have suspected that he belonged to this Hutchinson family, but I had not encountered a compiled family history tying together the various siblings.

This document does not explicitly identify Albert as a son of Aaron Hutchinson, Jr., but it does mention an **Albert Hutchinson (born 1837, died 1867, "buried at sea")**, noting that he appears in the 1850 census with the Finch family and may be connected to Aaron Hutchinson, Jr.

That immediately caught my attention.

The compiler wrote:

> "I'm not sure if Wells and Elizabeth are Albert's brother and sister or his children or if they belong to a different family. They are named as heirs in the settlement of Aaron Hutchinson's, Jr.'s brother, Lewis Nelson Hutchinson and they just must belong to him someway by the process of elimination."

That isn't proof, of course—but it is a clue.

Evaluating Compiled Genealogies

This appears to be an older privately compiled family history rather than a formally published genealogical work. Like many such compilations, it mixes documented information with speculation.

The compiler frequently uses phrases such as:

- *"probably"*
- *"no proof"*

- *“there may be more”*
- *“I think”*
- *“must belong by process of elimination”*

That means this is **not a source to copy blindly into a family tree.**

However, it *is* a valuable roadmap because the compiler references:

- cemetery records
- probate files
- newspaper notices
- local history books
- church baptismal records
- old family letters

Even when conclusions are uncertain, the cited sources may lead to original records.

The Aaron Hutchinson Family Compilation

With the help of ChatGPT, I created a faithful transcription of Clara J. McCabe’s 1957 compiled family history *Aaron Hutchinson, 1767–1833*, accessed through Ancestry’s *U.S., Family History Books* collection. Because the transcription is lengthy, I’ve made it available as a separate Google document.

Read the full transcription of the Aaron Hutchinson family compilation here.

This transcription is a faithful rendering of the original document, preserving the compiler’s spellings, uncertainty notes, and comments.

As with any compiled genealogy, treat the conclusions as research clues rather than proven fact—but the references to probate, cemetery, church, and newspaper records make this a potentially valuable roadmap.

Why This Matters

Even if every conclusion in this document does not hold up under scrutiny, it gives me something I didn’t have before: a working hypothesis for Albert Hutchinson’s place in the broader Hutchinson family.

If this Albert is indeed the same man who later married **Julia Harding**, then:

- Aaron Hutchinson would be a likely ancestor
- Cynthia Finch would be an aunt
- the Finch family connection in the 1850 census would make sense
- probate records involving Lewis Nelson Hutchinson become highly relevant

In other words, this hint may have opened several new research paths.

Next Steps

My next steps will be to:

- locate the probate settlement for **Lewis Nelson Hutchinson**
- examine the 1850 census entry placing Albert with the Finch family to locate other Hutchinson descendants
- look for records tying Albert to the Hutchinson heirs
- locate land records for the Hutchinson family in Monroe county, New York

Have you ever had a compiled family history hint that turned out to be either wonderfully useful—or completely wrong?

Sometimes the real value of a record isn’t the answers it gives, but the questions it helps us ask.

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 12, 2026
Crawford
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/12/friday-find-120/

When the Wrong Record Still Tells a Story

Genealogy research rarely follows a perfectly straight path.

Sometimes the record you want is missing.

Sometimes the index contains an error.

And sometimes, after carefully ordering a document and waiting for it to arrive in the mail, you open the envelope and discover… the wrong record.

That's the story behind today's Friday Find.

Years ago, while researching my CRAWFORD family, I requested a California death certificate for **Henry Clay Crawford**, the son of **James H. Crawford**, who died in California in 1944. I hoped the certificate would provide another useful clue for that branch of the family.

Instead, the certificate I received belonged to another man entirely: **Henry C. Crawford**, who died in California in 1936.

Not exactly what I had ordered.

At the time, I was probably more than a little frustrated. In those pre-digital days, obtaining records meant identifying the record, completing the request, mailing payment, and waiting for the response. When the wrong record arrived, there was no instant email exchange or quick online correction.

Still, genealogists learn to look closely at every document.

And this "wrong" record turned out to tell an interesting story.

Meet the Other Henry Crawford

The death certificate identified this Henry Crawford as a widowed farmer who died in Los Angeles on **9 February 1936** at the age of 74.

According to the certificate, he was born in **Tipton, Iowa**, the son of **Andrew Crawford** and **Carrie**, and his late wife was **Delilah Crawford**.

He had lived in California for more than thirty years.

His cause of death was listed as **cancer of the stomach**, with obstruction at the pylorus as a contributing condition.

Although this Henry Crawford was not the Henry I had intended to document, he was clearly a real person with a family and a story.

Following the Detour

Because I already had the certificate in hand, curiosity took over.

Who was this Henry Crawford?

A little investigation showed that he belonged to a Crawford family from Iowa that later migrated to California. As far as I know, this family is not closely related to my own Crawford line—if related at all.

But once I had learned a bit about him, it seemed wrong to simply file the certificate away and forget about it.

So I added Henry as a floating family in my genealogy database and attached the death certificate to his record.

Perhaps someday a descendant or researcher working on this Crawford family will stumble across that document and find it useful.

Lessons from an Unexpected Find

Genealogy research teaches flexibility.

Not every lead pans out.

Not every ordered record is the right one.

Not every research detour connects directly to your own ancestral line.

But even mistakes can become discoveries.

That mistaken certificate gave me a glimpse into another Crawford family's history—one I might never have encountered otherwise.

And instead of becoming a wasted expense, it became another preserved record available for future researchers.

Friday Find Reflection

Have you ever ordered the wrong record?

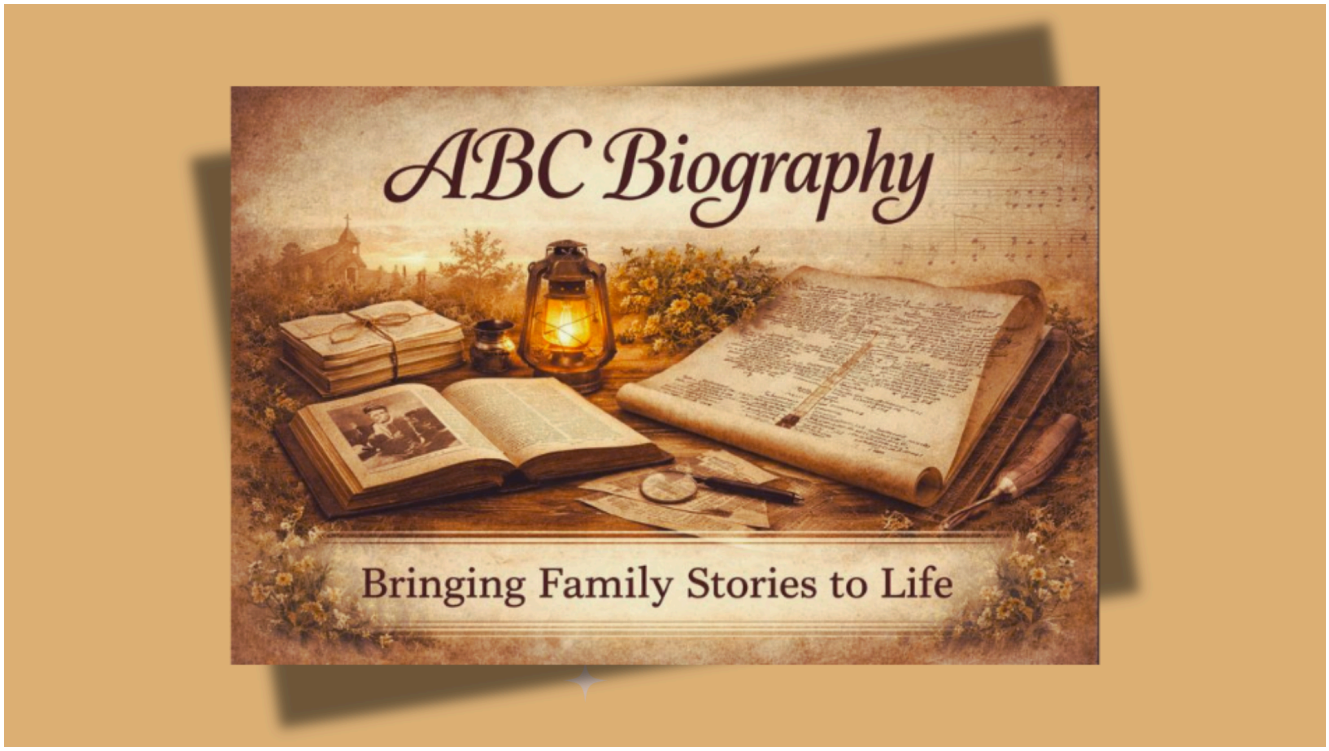
Or followed a research lead that turned out to belong to an entirely different family?

Sometimes those unexpected detours become some of the most memorable parts of genealogy research.

After all, every record tells someone's story.

ABC Biography: Albert Hutchinson

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 13, 2026
ABC Biography,Hutchinson
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/13/biography-2/



One of my goals is to create biographies for my ancestors using the records I have gathered over the years. Today's biography focuses on my second great-grandfather, Albert Hutchinson, a Civil War veteran whose life took him from New York to Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas.

Early Life

Albert Hutchinson was born about 1836 in Northampton, Fulton County, New York. Much about his childhood remains a mystery, but the 1850 census provides an important clue. Fourteen-year-old Albert was living in the household of Ephraim and Cynthia Finch in Monroe County, New York.

Family evidence suggests that Cynthia Finch may have been Albert's aunt, which would explain why he was living in their household as a teenager. Whatever the circumstances, Albert grew up during a period when many families were moving west in search of new opportunities.

Albert Hutchinson (1836–1896):
A Life of Service, Farming, and Family
1836 - Birth and Westward Migration
New York → Iowa
Born in New York, Hutchinson migrated to Iowa, marrying Julia Harding in 1859.
1861–1866
Military Service in the 1st Iowa Cavalry
Military Service Record
Service Branch: Rank: Dates of Service:
1st Regiment Iowa Cavalry Private Enlisted 1861
1st Regiment Iowa Cavalry Private Re-enlisted Jan 1, 1864
1st Regiment Iowa Cavalry Private Discharged Feb 15, 1866
Served as a Private in Company D, completing service in Arkansas and Texas.
A Legacy of 12 Children
Fathered eleven children with his first wife, Julia, and one with his second, Eliza.
Life as a Midwestern Farmer
Hutchinson managed multiple land plots and farms across Bremer, Mitchell, and Clay counties.
1896 - Final Rest in Kansas
After receiving a veteran's pension, he died at age 60 in Doniphan, Kansas.
NotebookLM

Marriage and Life in Iowa

Like many young men of his generation, Albert eventually headed west. On September 14, 1859, he married Julia Harding in Black Hawk County, Iowa.

Julia Melinda Harding was born in 1840 in New Brunswick, Canada, the daughter of William Gillies Harding and Elizabeth Fowler. The young couple established their home in Iowa, where Albert worked as a farmer.

The 1860 census shows Albert and Julia living in Black Hawk County. Also residing with them were Julia's younger sister Isabella Harding and Loren Gilbert, suggesting a household that included both family and friends.

Their first daughter, Gertrude, had been born earlier that summer, and son Albert G. Hutchinson arrived two years later.

Answering the Call to Serve

The Civil War interrupted Albert's life as a young husband and father.

Albert enlisted as a private in Company D of the 1st Iowa Cavalry. The regiment served throughout the western theater of the war, participating in operations across Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, and other southern states.

Unlike the large battles that often dominate Civil War history, cavalry units frequently performed scouting missions, guarded supply lines, escorted prisoners, and conducted raids deep into enemy territory. These duties often required long periods away from home under difficult conditions.

Albert was mustered out at Little Rock, Arkansas, on December 31, 1863. Demonstrating his dedication to the Union cause, he reenlisted the very next day and continued serving until February 15, 1866, when he was discharged in Austin, Texas.

His service spanned nearly the entire conflict and extended into the post-war occupation period.

Growing Family

While Albert served in the military, Julia managed the household and cared for their growing family.

Together, Albert and Julia became the parents of eleven known children:

- Gertrude Hutchinson (1860–1914)
- Albert G. Hutchinson (1862–1922)
- William Henry Hutchinson (1865–1936)

- Frederick Hutchinson (born about 1867)
- Cary Hutchinson (born about 1869)
- Winifred Mae “Winnie” Hutchinson (1871–1913)
- Elnora Hutchinson (1874–1921)
- Guy Thomas Hutchinson (1876–1946)
- Francesca Hutchinson (born 1879)
- Howard Hutchinson (1881–1905)
- Elvira Hutchinson (born about 1884)

The family moved several times as Albert sought farming opportunities. Records place them in Black Hawk, Bremer, Mitchell, and Floyd counties in Iowa before they eventually relocated farther south.

One interesting challenge for researchers is that census records do not always agree. Albert’s birthplace was reported differently from census to census, and the family’s surname was occasionally misspelled. Such inconsistencies are common in nineteenth-century records and remind us to look at the broader collection of evidence rather than relying on a single document.

Loss and Remarriage

After more than thirty years of marriage, Albert suffered a devastating loss when Julia died on January 4, 1892, in Doniphan County, Kansas.

The following year, Albert remarried. On August 8, 1893, he married Honore Eliza Van Valkenberg in St. Joseph, Missouri.

A brief newspaper notice in the *St. Joseph Gazette* recorded the issuance of their marriage license among the many couples marrying that week.

Albert and Eliza had one son together:

- Elmer E. Hutchinson (1895–1926)

The household also included two young boys, Howard and Peter Noland, who were living with Albert and Eliza in the 1895 Kansas census.

Veteran and Pensioner

Like many Union veterans, Albert applied for a military pension based on his Civil War service. His pension was approved in 1890.

That same year, he appeared on the special Veterans Schedule of the federal census. Because most of the 1890 census was later destroyed by fire, these surviving veterans schedules are often invaluable resources for family historians.

The schedule recorded Albert’s service in Company D of the 1st Iowa Cavalry and preserved details of his military record for future generations.

Final Years

By the mid-1890s, Albert was living in Doniphan County, Kansas, near the Missouri River communities where several of his children would later settle.

Albert Hutchinson died on July 22, 1896, at approximately sixty years of age. He was buried in Elwood Cemetery in Elwood, Kansas.

Although he did not live to see the twentieth century, Albert witnessed tremendous changes during his lifetime. He was born during the era of frontier expansion, served during the Civil War, and helped settle portions of the Midwest as railroads transformed the American landscape.

Why Albert’s Story Matters

Albert Hutchinson’s life illustrates the experiences of many nineteenth-century Americans. He moved westward in search of opportunity, served his country during the Civil War, farmed the rich lands of Iowa, and raised a large family whose descendants would spread across the Midwest.

For me, Albert is more than a name in a database or a collection of census entries. He is my second great-grandfather—a man whose decisions, sacrifices, and perseverance helped shape the family that followed.

Every record discovered adds another piece to his story, helping us better understand not only Albert Hutchinson but also the generations who came before and after him.

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 14, 2026
Hammond,SaturdayNightGenealogyFun
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/14/saturday-night-genealogy-fun-202/

Calling all Genea-Musings Fans:

It's Saturday Night again—

time for some more Genealogy Fun!!

Here is your assignment if you choose to play along (cue the *Mission Impossible* music, please!):

1. Were you lucky enough to receive or discover artifacts from your ancestors (parents, grandparents, or more distant relatives) as you pursued your genealogy research?
2. Describe one or more of the artifacts you found or received and where you obtained them.

I consider myself extremely fortunate when it comes to family artifacts and heirlooms. Both of my grandmothers preserved a variety of family treasures, including photographs, documents, letters, and family Bibles. In fact, it was my grandmother Crawford who first sparked my interest in genealogy and taught me how to use local research resources, including microfilmed newspapers.

While the family Bibles are among my most treasured possessions, one item stands out as an especially fortunate discovery: my great-grandmother Josie Winifred Hammond's poetry journal.

The journal contains dozens of poems that offer glimpses into both family life and the experiences of prairie settlers. Some poems tell stories about family members, while others capture the challenges, joys, and everyday realities of life on the Kansas prairie. Recognizing their historical value, I transcribed the collection and submitted it to the Kansas Memory Project under the title *Josie's Ledger*.

One of my favorite poems from the collection is "Little Sod Shanty." The poem reflects the affection and appreciation pioneer families often felt for the humble homes that sheltered them through the hardships of frontier life.

As an experiment, I used Suno to transform Josie's poem into a song. Hearing words written by my great-grandmother more than a century ago come alive through music was a unique experience—one that helped me connect with her in a new way.

Below is a video created from that song.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=UqKiltgar-o

Monday's Diggings

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 15, 2026
DAR,Wells
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/15/mondays-diggings-35/

A DAR Application for My Ancestor Nathaniel Wells

One of the pleasures of genealogy is discovering that a document collected years ago contains information that is far more relevant than I originally realized. That was the case when I recently revisited a photocopy of a 1923 application for membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

The application was submitted by **Imelda May Jessee** of Wallingford, Vermont, and approved in January 1924. At first glance, it appeared to be simply another Wells family document. Upon closer examination, however, I realized that the Revolutionary War patriot named in the application, **Nathaniel Wells**, is also my ancestor.

Nathaniel Wells and his wife, **Polly (Mary) Thurston Wells**, are my **5th great-grandparents**.

A Shared Lineage

The DAR application traces Imelda May Jessee's descent from Nathaniel Wells through the following line:

1. Imelda May Jessee
2. Frances E. Clapp (1859–1910)
3. Sarah Wells (1825–1910)
4. Joseph Wells (1790–1845)
5. Thurston Wells (1766–1818)
6. Nathaniel Wells (about 1730–1804)

The application also identifies the spouses in each generation:

- Frances E. Clapp married Fred Robinson.
- Sarah Wells married George Clapp.
- Joseph Wells married Harriet Blake.
- Thurston Wells married Irene Badger.
- Nathaniel Wells married Polly (Mary) Thurston.

While the lineage was prepared to establish Imelda's eligibility for DAR membership, it also provides information about my own Wells ancestry. Discovering a lineage society application that documents one of my direct ancestral lines is always exciting, particularly when it was created more than a century ago.

Nathaniel Wells: Revolutionary War Soldier

The primary purpose of the application was to prove Revolutionary War service. According to the documentation submitted with the application, Nathaniel Wells served as a private during the American Revolution.

The application cites *Connecticut Men in the Revolution* and states that Nathaniel Wells:

- Enlisted on 6 May 1775
- Served as a Private
- Was assigned to Captain James Chapman's Company
- Served in the regiment commanded by Colonel Samuel Holden Parsons
- Was discharged on 17 December 1776

The accompanying service statement explains that Parsons' regiment was raised during the first call for troops in the spring of 1775. Recruits came from New London, Hartford, and Middlesex Counties in Connecticut.

The regiment participated in the defense of the Boston area during the early months of the war. Nathaniel and his fellow soldiers served at Roxbury as part of General Joseph Spencer's Brigade, helping maintain the siege that ultimately forced the British evacuation of Boston in March 1776.

Although the service summary is brief, it places Nathaniel among the ordinary soldiers whose service helped secure American independence.

The Value of Earlier DAR Applications

One detail that caught my attention was the reference to an earlier DAR application, National Number 55401. The application was also verified against another previously approved DAR membership.

Those references remind us that lineage society applications are often interconnected. Earlier applications may contain supporting records, family Bible entries, correspondence, or additional evidence that was not copied into later applications. They can serve as valuable research leads for future investigation.

Of course, like any compiled genealogy, information from early DAR applications should be verified against original records whenever possible. Standards of documentation have changed considerably since the 1920s. Nevertheless, these applications frequently preserve clues that might otherwise be lost.

Why I'm Keeping This Record

This DAR application is more than a lineage chart. It connects a twentieth-century descendant to a Revolutionary War soldier and preserves family relationships spanning nearly two hundred years.

For me, it has an added significance. The application was prepared by another descendant of Nathaniel Wells, but it also documents my own ancestry. Seeing Nathaniel Wells and Polly (Mary) Thurston identified as the parents of Thurston Wells provides another piece of evidence connecting generations of the Wells family.

Sometimes the most interesting discoveries are not new records at all. They are records that have been sitting in our files for years, waiting for us to look at them again with fresh eyes.

Have you ever rediscovered a document in your files and realized it contained information about one of your own direct ancestors?

Albert Hutchinson's Song

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 16, 2026
Artificial Intelligence,Hutchinson
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/16/song/

Bringing Albert Hutchinson's Story to Life with Music and Video

One of my genealogy goals is to preserve family stories in formats that make them accessible and engaging for future generations. Traditional biographies are an important part of that effort, but I've also been experimenting with ways to combine genealogy research with modern technology.

Recently, I completed an ABC Biography for my second great-grandfather, Albert Hutchinson (c.1836–1896). Albert's life took him from New York to Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas. Along the way he served in the 1st Iowa Cavalry during the Civil War, raised a large family, and helped settle the American Midwest.

After completing his biography, I decided to take the project a step further.

Turning a Biography into a Song

Using the information from Albert's biography, I asked ChatGPT to create song lyrics that told the story of his life. The resulting lyrics followed Albert's journey from his childhood in New York, through his Civil War service, and into his years as a farmer, husband, and father.

To bring those lyrics to life, I entered them into Suno, an AI music platform that can create original songs from user-supplied lyrics and style prompts.

The style I selected was a folk-country ballad, which seemed appropriate for a nineteenth-century pioneer whose life was shaped by westward migration, military service, and farming. Suno generated a song that captured both the historical setting and the emotional tone of Albert's story.

Creating Visuals with NotebookLM

While the song provided the audio component, I also wanted visual elements for a video.

For that purpose, I turned to Google NotebookLM. Using information from Albert's biography, NotebookLM generated an infographic summarizing key events from his life. The infographic provided a visual timeline of Albert's journey and highlighted important milestones such as his marriage, military service, migration, and family.

The infographic served as the visual foundation for the video.

Combining the Pieces in Canva

Once I had both the song and the infographic, I used Canva to assemble the final project.

The audio generated by Suno was placed over the infographic, creating a simple video presentation that allows viewers to listen to Albert's story while viewing highlights from his life.

The result is something quite different from a traditional genealogy report. Instead of reading several pages of narrative, family members can spend a few minutes listening to Albert's story unfold through music.

The Finished Video

You can watch the completed video below.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=9mZsKnOvZRU

Enlisted in the 1st Regiment Iowa Cavalry
1 Year, 3 Months, 24 Days of Service
Pioneer Life & Family Expansion
A Legacy of 13 Children
Migration Across the Midwest
Secured Military Pension in 1890

Replace this text with the YouTube embed code when publishing the post.

Reflections on AI and Family History

One of the things I enjoy most about these projects is seeing how different AI tools can work together.

For this project:

- RootsMagic provided the narrative report.
- ChatGPT helped transform the research into a biography and song lyrics.
- Suno created the music.
- Google NotebookLM generated the infographic.
- Canva combined the audio and visuals into a video.
- YouTube provided a platform for sharing the finished project.

None of these tools replace traditional genealogy research. The records, documents, and evidence still form the foundation of the work. What these tools do provide are new ways to present and share family history.

Albert Hutchinson lived nearly 130 years ago. Thanks to a combination of historical records and modern technology, his story can now be experienced not only through documents and photographs, but also through music and video.

I suspect Albert could never have imagined such a thing, but I like to think he would be pleased that his story continues to be remembered.

When AI Makes Assumptions

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 17, 2026
Hutchinson
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/17/when-ai-makes-assumptions/

Lessons Learned from Google NotebookLM

One of the most common complaints about artificial intelligence tools is that they “make things up.” Genealogists are especially sensitive to this issue because we spend so much time evaluating evidence and separating fact from speculation.

While recently experimenting with Google NotebookLM, I discovered that the tool wasn’t exactly inventing information. Instead, it was making assumptions based on the data I provided.

The source material was a narrative report generated from my RootsMagic file about my second great-grandfather, Albert Hutchinson. I used the report to create audio overviews, infographics, and videos. While the results were impressive, they also revealed some important limitations.

Assumption #1: Albert Was a Farm Laborer

In one audio overview, NotebookLM described fourteen-year-old Albert Hutchinson as working as a farm laborer in the household of Ephraim Finch in 1850.

At first glance, that seems like a reasonable conclusion. The report stated that Albert was living in the household of Ephraim Finch, a farmer. Since Albert was a teenage boy living on a farm, the AI inferred that he was likely helping with farm work.

The problem is that the report did not contain the full story.

Additional research suggests that Cynthia Finch, Ephraim’s wife, was Albert’s aunt. That family relationship helps explain why Albert was living in the household and provides important context that was missing from the narrative report.

Was Albert helping on the farm? Quite possibly.

Do I have evidence proving he was a farm laborer? No.

NotebookLM took a logical step beyond the available evidence and presented the conclusion as fact.

Assumption #2: The Mystery of the Thirteenth Child

A second error appeared in an infographic generated from an NGSQ-style modified register report.

The infographic stated that Albert Hutchinson had thirteen children.

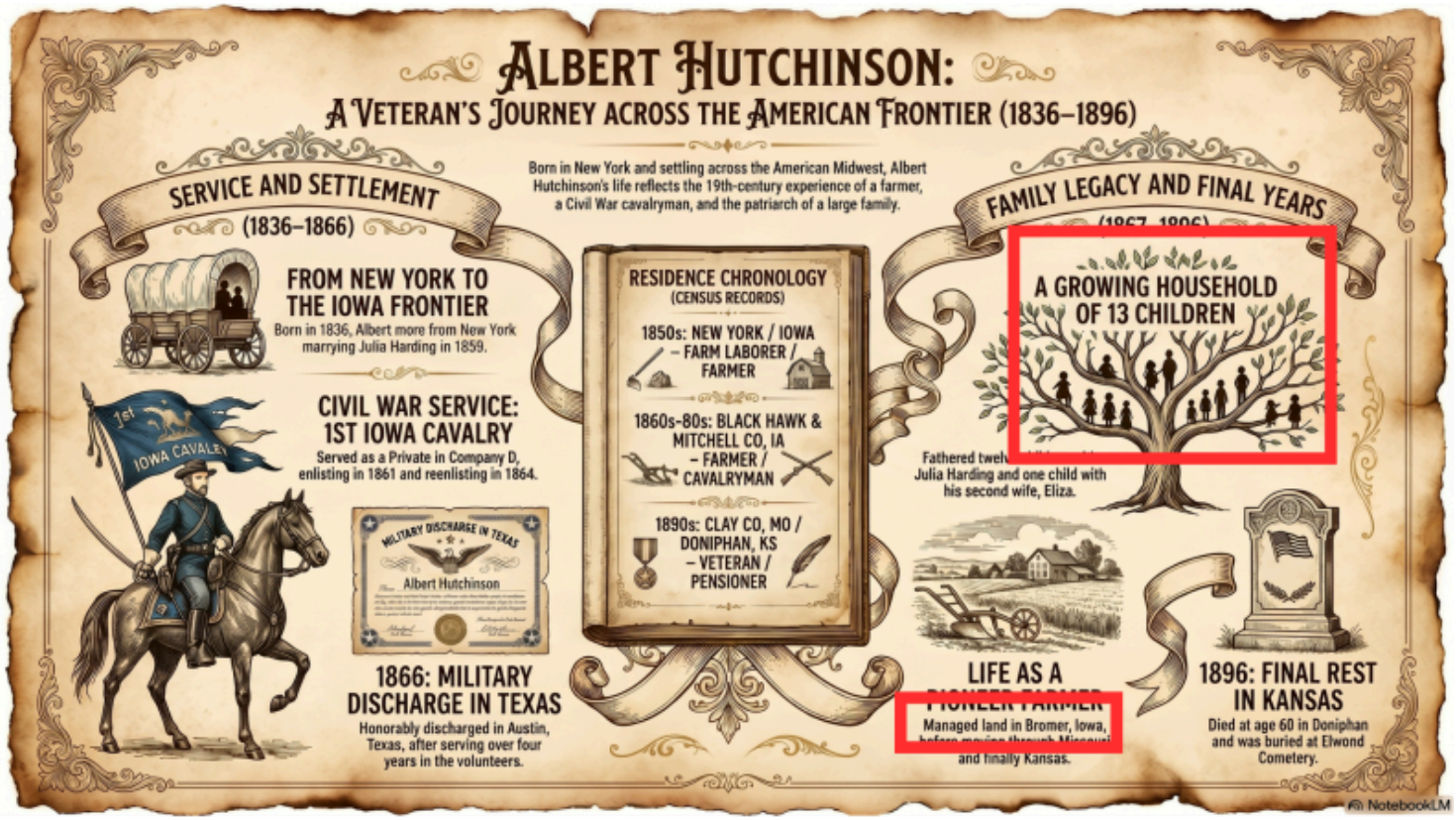
That immediately caught my attention because Albert actually had twelve children.

After examining the report, I realized what had happened. In a modified register report, the principal person is assigned the number “1” and the children are numbered beginning with “2.”

Before uploading the report, I had removed the number “1” from Albert’s entry because it looked unnecessary.

Unfortunately, NotebookLM interpreted the numbering sequence literally. Since the first child was numbered “2,” the AI assumed there must have been a missing child numbered “1.” As a result, it counted Albert’s twelve documented children plus an imaginary “Child #1,” arriving at a total of thirteen children.

The error wasn’t caused by bad genealogy. It was caused by the AI trying to make sense of a numbering system it didn’t understand.


ALBERT HUTCHINSON:
A VETERAN'S JOURNEY ACROSS THE AMERICAN FRONTIER (1836–1896)
Born in New York and settling across the American Midwest, Albert Hutchinson's life reflects the 19th-century experience of a farmer, a Civil War cavalryman, and the patriarch of a large family.
SERVICE AND SETTLEMENT
(1836–1866)
FROM NEW YORK TO THE IOWA FRONTIER
Born in 1836, Albert more from New York marrying Julia Harding in 1859.
CIVIL WAR SERVICE: 1ST IOWA CAVALRY
Served as a Private in Company D, enlisting in 1861 and reenlisting in 1864.
1866: MILITARY DISCHARGE IN TEXAS
Honorably discharged in Austin, Texas, after serving over four years in the volunteers.
RESIDENCE CHRONOLOGY
(CENSUS RECORDS)
1850s: NEW YORK / IOWA – FARM LABORER / FARMER
1860s-80s: BLACK HAWK & MITCHELL CO, IA – FARMER / CAVALRYMAN
1890s: CLAY CO, MO / DONIPHAN, KS – VETERAN / PENSIONER
FAMILY LEGACY AND FINAL YEARS
A GROWING HOUSEHOLD OF 13 CHILDREN
Julia Harding and one child with his second wife, Eliza.
LIFE AS A
and finally Kansas.
1896: FINAL REST IN KANSAS
Died at age 60 in Doniphan and was buried at Elwond Cemetery.
NotebookLM

What I Learned

These experiences taught me that AI tools are only as good as the information and context we provide.

When using genealogy reports with AI tools such as NotebookLM, it helps to remember that the software does not understand our research process. It only sees the words and numbers that appear in the document.

As genealogists, we often know facts that are not explicitly stated in a report. We understand family relationships, recognize standard report formats, and know when evidence is incomplete. AI tools do not possess that background knowledge unless we provide it.

Moving Forward

As I continue using AI to create biographies, infographics, audio overviews, and videos, I plan to make a few adjustments.

First, I will add explanatory notes to key events when additional context is important. For example, I can note that Cynthia Finch was Albert’s aunt rather than relying on the AI to infer why he was living in her household.

Second, I will explain report formats and numbering systems before uploading the material. A simple note that the principal person is numbered “1” and children begin with “2” may prevent the AI from inventing an extra child.

Finally, I will continue reviewing every AI-generated product with the same critical eye I use when evaluating genealogical records. AI can be a powerful assistant, but it still requires a genealogist to verify the results.

In this case, Google NotebookLM reminded me of an important truth: artificial intelligence doesn't always make things up. Sometimes it simply makes assumptions—and those assumptions can be surprisingly easy to miss.

Thinking AI and Genealogy

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 18, 2026
Artificial Intelligence
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/18/thinking-ai/

Real Examples from My Own Research

Recently, Randy Seaver of Genea-Musings asked an artificial intelligence tool an interesting question:

> "Please provide a list of examples of how a 'Thinking AI' model might be used in June 2026 to help genealogy and family history researchers and writers."

Randy shared the results in his post, "Ask AI: What Can a Thinking AI Model Do for Genealogy and Family History Researchers?" on Genea-Musings. Randy's question prompted me to wonder whether I was already using a "thinking AI" model in my own genealogy work.

So I asked ChatGPT a simple question:

> "Are you a thinking AI tool?"

The answer was yes. While AI tools are often associated with transcription, translation, and content creation, a thinking AI goes beyond those tasks. Its value lies in analyzing evidence, evaluating competing theories, identifying assumptions, and helping researchers reason through difficult problems.

After reviewing the list of genealogy applications generated by AI, I asked a follow-up question:

> "Which of the above tasks have you already done in our various chats?"

The answer surprised me.

More Than Transcription and Writing

Like many genealogists, I first began using AI for tasks such as:

- Transcribing documents
- Summarizing records
- Creating blog posts

- Writing biographies
- Generating historical context

However, over time I found myself using AI in a much different way.

Instead of simply asking AI to create content, I was using it as a research partner.

Evaluating Conflicting Evidence

One of the most common uses has been evaluating conflicting evidence.

Whether working with DAR applications, death certificates, census records, or online trees, AI has helped compare sources and identify inconsistencies.

Rather than simply accepting one record over another, the discussions often focus on:

- Who provided the information?
- When was the record created?
- Which source is likely to be most reliable?
- What additional evidence is needed?

These are the same types of questions genealogists ask when evaluating evidence.

Testing Genealogical Hypotheses

Perhaps the best example is my ongoing research involving the various James Crawford families.

Over the years I have accumulated records for multiple men named James Crawford living in Kentucky and Ohio during the same time period. Determining which records belong to which man is not a simple search problem.

Instead, it requires analyzing:

- Land records
- Tax lists
- Probate records
- Marriage records
- Associates and neighbors
- DNA evidence

AI has helped organize the evidence, compare competing theories, and identify weaknesses in each hypothesis.

It hasn’t solved the problem, but it has helped me think through it.

FAN Club Analysis

Many of my brick-wall projects involve researching Friends, Associates, and Neighbors (the FAN Club principle).

In discussions involving the Crawford, Sellers, Anderson, Douglas, and Maxwell families, AI has helped identify recurring connections and patterns across multiple records.

This type of analysis can be difficult when dealing with dozens of individuals spread across many documents.

DNA Analysis and Interpretation

Another area where AI has been useful is DNA analysis.

While AI cannot replace careful DNA research, it can help evaluate:

- Shared match groups
- Leeds Method clusters
- ThruLines evidence
- Y-DNA results
- Descendant documentation strategies

More importantly, it can help identify where assumptions may be creeping into the analysis.

Detecting Assumptions

Ironically, some of my recent blog posts have focused on AI making assumptions.

For example, Google NotebookLM assumed that Albert Hutchinson was working as a farm laborer simply because he appeared in the household of Ephraim Finch in the 1850 census.

The original report did not say that.

Similarly, a NotebookLM video discussing Angelina Currey Burke displayed imagery associated with Posey County, Indiana while discussing her Kentucky origins.

These experiences led to an important realization:

AI is most valuable when it helps us recognize assumptions—whether those assumptions come from AI, online family trees, published genealogies, or even our own research.

Building Research Plans

Another task I had not fully appreciated was research planning.

When discussing my brick-wall ancestor Hiram M. Currey, AI helped develop a research strategy involving:

- Mexican War records
- Bounty land files
- Probate records
- Court records
- Newspaper research
- California sources
- Guardianship records

Rather than simply suggesting records, it helped prioritize potential sources and organize future research.

Creating Family History Narratives

Of course, AI has also become part of my writing workflow.

Many of my recent projects have involved using AI to help create:

- Ancestor biographies
- Military biographies
- Friday Find posts
- Monday's Diggings posts
- Historical context sections
- Meta descriptions
- Social media blurbs

These tasks are perhaps the most visible uses of AI, but they are not necessarily the most powerful.

A Research Partner

After reviewing the list, I realized that I am already using AI in ways I had not fully recognized.

The most valuable role is not transcription.

It is not content creation.

It is not even document analysis.

The greatest value comes from having a research partner available at any hour—one that can review evidence, challenge assumptions, suggest alternatives, and help organize complex problems.

AI does not replace genealogical judgment. It cannot determine whether a conclusion is correct.

But it can help us think more carefully about the evidence.

And for genealogists working through difficult problems, that may be one of the most useful tools of all.

For those interested in the original discussion, be sure to read Randy Seaver's Genea-Musings post asking AI what a "Thinking AI" model can do for genealogy researchers. It is an excellent reminder that the future of AI in genealogy may be less about finding records and more about helping us reason through what those records mean.

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 19, 2026
Crawford
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/19/friday-find-121/

Another Case of the Wrong John Crawford

Apparently, ordering California death certificates and receiving the wrong CRAWFORD was a recurring theme in my genealogy research.

Today's Friday Find features yet another case of mistaken identity.

Years ago, I requested the California death certificate for **John Edgar Crawford**, my **first cousin three times removed**, who died in California in 1944. I hoped the document would provide another useful clue for my Crawford research.

Instead, the certificate that arrived belonged to a different man entirely: **John E. Crawford**, who died in San Diego in 1927.

Not my John Crawford.

But still, someone's John Crawford.

Genealogists who research common surnames know exactly how this happens. A name in an index looks promising. Initials match. The location seems plausible. A request gets mailed off. Weeks later, the envelope arrives—and suddenly you're looking at the life story of a stranger.

Meet the Other John E. Crawford

This John E. Crawford was born on **25 November 1859 in California**, making him a California native at a time when that was still relatively uncommon.

According to his death certificate, he was:

- a **prospector**
- married to **Maybell Crawford**
- the son of **John Crawford**, born in Pennsylvania
- and **Julia Ann Binns**, born in Scotland

He died at **San Diego County General Hospital** on **11 May 1927**, age 67.

The cause of death reflects the blunt medical terminology of the era: **uremia**, **pyelonephritis**, and **diffuse arteriosclerosis**.

His final resting place was listed as **Masonic Cemetery** in San Diego.

Following the Unexpected Trail

Since I already had the certificate, I decided to learn a little more about the man.

A bit of research showed that this John E. Crawford appears on **FamilySearch (LTDQ-12J)** and now has a memorial on Find a Grave. I also found him in an Ancestry tree—the *Binns, David and Elizabeth-Virginia* tree—which helped provide enough context to identify him.

Since I had the death certificate in hand, I added John to my own tree as a floating individual so I could attach the record and make it available for others researching this family.

Because that has become my philosophy with these mistaken finds: if the record exists in my files, perhaps it should help someone.

A Familiar Genealogy Lesson

This is now at least the second California death certificate in my files that was ordered for one Crawford but turned out to belong to another.

Apparently, common surnames and paper record requests were not always an ideal combination.

Still, these mistakes remind me of what genealogy research used to be like.

Before online databases delivered instant images, we worked from indexes, mailed forms, enclosed checks, and hoped we had identified the correct person.

Sometimes we guessed wrong.

And sometimes the mistake introduced us to an entirely different family.

Friday Find Reflection

Have you ever ordered the wrong record?

Perhaps a death certificate for the wrong person, a pension file for the wrong soldier, or a deed belonging to an entirely different family?

Those mistaken records can be frustrating—but they also remind us that every document represents a real person whose story deserves preservation.

Even when they aren't *our* person.A Friday Find about another genealogy record mix-up: the California death certificate I ordered for John Edgar Crawford turned out to belong to a different John E. Crawford—but still revealed an interesting family story.

The Paper Trail of Albert Hutchinson's Civil War Service

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 20, 2026
Artificial Intelligence,Civil War,Hutchinson
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/20/paper-trail/

One of the challenges of family history research is moving beyond names and dates to better understand an ancestor's life experiences. Military records can be especially valuable because they often document where a person was, what they were doing, and how major historical events affected their life.

Recently, I decided to take a closer look at the military records of my second great-grandfather, Albert Hutchinson, and experiment with a new way of presenting those records.

The result is a video titled **"Paper Trail of Albert Hutchinson"**, which uses Google NotebookLM's cinematic video feature to tell the story of Albert's Civil War service through the records that survive today.

Albert Hutchinson and the Civil War

Albert Hutchinson enlisted as a private in Company D of the 1st Iowa Cavalry during the Civil War.

Like many Union soldiers, Albert left behind a paper trail that helps document his military career. Muster rolls, enlistment records, pension records, and other military documents provide glimpses into his years of service.

These records reveal that Albert first enlisted in the Union Army, served in the western theater of the war, was mustered out in Arkansas, reenlisted, and continued serving until his discharge in Texas in 1866.

His service stretched across some of the most turbulent years in American history and carried him hundreds of miles from his Iowa home.

Turning Records into a Story

As genealogists, we often work with individual documents—one pension record, one enlistment paper, one census page at a time. While each document provides valuable information, it can sometimes be difficult to see how those pieces fit together into a larger story.

To help visualize Albert's military journey, I used Google NotebookLM to analyze information from his military records and create a cinematic overview of his service.

The resulting video follows Albert's military career through the surviving documents, showing how individual records combine to tell the story of a Civil War soldier.

Rather than focusing on battles or military strategy, the video emphasizes the records themselves—the paper trail that allows descendants to reconstruct Albert's experiences more than 150 years later.

The Video

You can watch the video below.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=zz-HdDZdPBw

Replace this text with the YouTube embed code for "Paper Trail of Albert Hutchinson."

Reflections on Using AI for Military History

One of the things I find most interesting about tools such as NotebookLM is their ability to transform traditional genealogy research into different formats.

For generations, family historians have relied on written reports and pedigree charts to preserve information. Today, we can supplement those formats with audio, infographics, timelines, and videos that may be more engaging for family members who are not active genealogists.

Of course, the records remain the foundation of the project. The video would not exist without the enlistment records, muster rolls, pension records, and other documents that preserved Albert's story.

What AI provides is a new way to organize and present that information.

Why the Paper Trail Matters

Albert Hutchinson's military records document more than his service in the Union Army. They provide evidence of his movements, his commitment to the war effort, and the experiences that shaped his life after returning home.

For descendants, these records help transform Albert from a name on a family tree into a real person who lived through one of the defining events in American history.

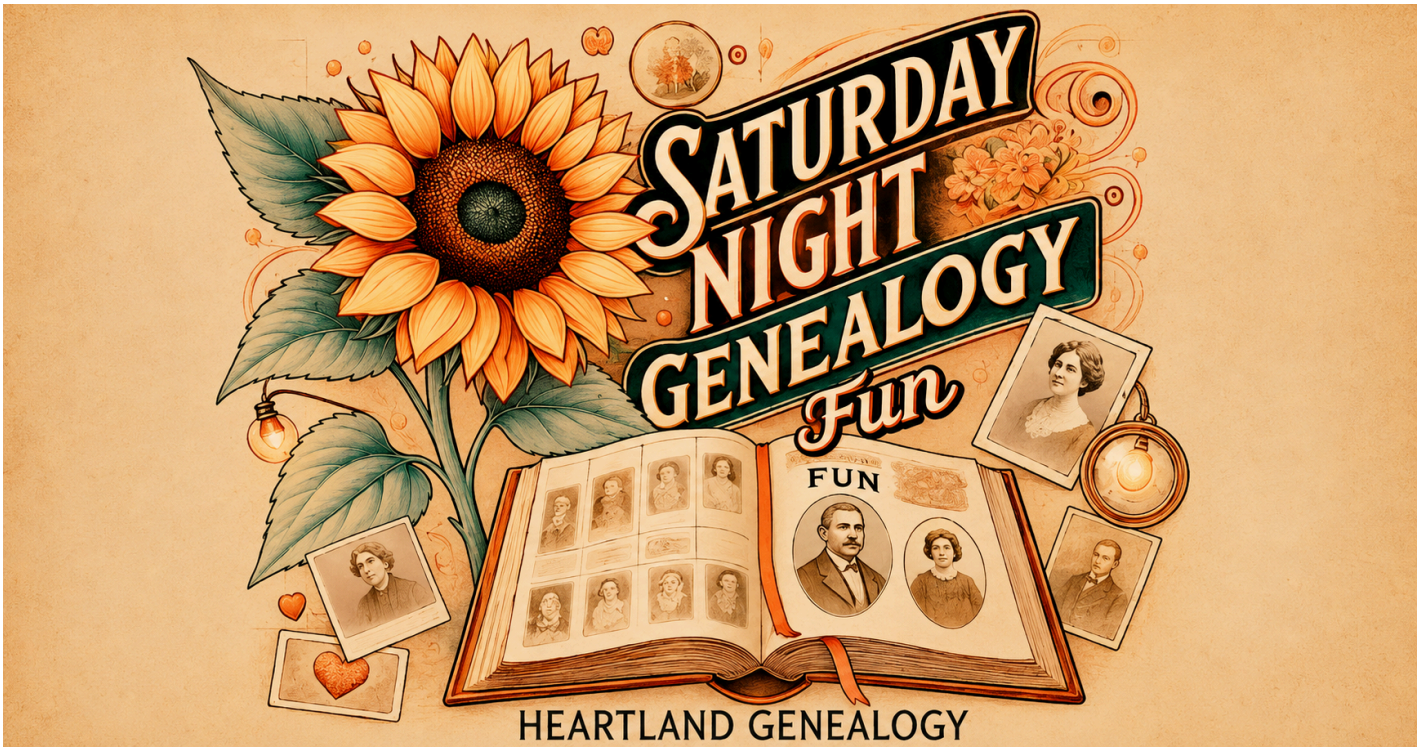
Every military pension file, muster roll, and enlistment record adds another piece to that story.

More than a century after Albert's death, those records continue to speak—and this video is one way of helping them tell his story.

Have you used AI tools to help present the stories of your military ancestors? If so, I'd love to hear about your experiences in the comments.

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 21, 2026
SaturdayNightGenealogyFun
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/21/saturday-night-genealogy-fun-203/



Calling all Genea-Musings Fans:

It's Saturday Night again—

Time for some more Genealogy Fun!!

Here is your assignment, should you decide to accept it (you ARE reading this, so I assume you really want to play along—cue the Mission Impossible music!):

1. Sunday is Father's Day in the USA, a time for memories and gratitude as we remember our fathers and father figures.
2. For this week's SNGF, tell us three things about your father that are special and memorable to you.

While I have many memories of my dad, I'm going to share three lessons he taught me that have stayed with me throughout my life.

Be an Observer

The first lesson was to be an observer.

Rather than teaching my brothers and me scientific terms from a textbook, Dad preferred to let us discover things for ourselves. One day he placed a white tulip in a clear vase filled with water tinted with food coloring. Then he challenged us to simply observe what happened over the next few days.

As the tulip absorbed the colored water, the veins in the flower gradually changed color. At the time, we were too young to realize that Dad was demonstrating how water and nutrients move through a plant. We could have learned the concept from a lecture or a book, but the lesson stuck because we were encouraged to watch, wonder, and draw our own conclusions.

That simple experiment taught me the importance of careful observation—a skill that has proven valuable not only in science but also in genealogy research.

Work Through the Struggle

The second lesson was to work through the struggle rather than give up when something seemed difficult.

In fourth grade, I was introduced to “new math.” Suddenly mathematics involved sets, logic, and concepts that seemed very strange to my young mind. I remember Dad patiently sitting with me as I worked my way through those unfamiliar ideas.

Years later, as a high school senior, I found myself struggling with a concept in chemistry. Once again, Dad was there to help me work through the problem, joined this time by my younger brother.

The irony is that I eventually became a chemistry teacher myself. Even today, I find myself using those same concepts of sets and logic when organizing information and searching for answers on the Internet. Dad taught me that learning isn’t always easy, but persistence often leads to understanding.

Learn from Others

The third lesson was the value of professional organizations and lifelong learning.

Dad led by example. He was an active member of the National Science Teachers Association and served as president of the Kansas Association of Teachers of Science. During my early years as a teacher, he often provided transportation so I could attend regional NSTA meetings.

Those experiences showed me the value of learning from colleagues, sharing ideas, and staying connected with others in your profession. Because of Dad’s example, I continued to participate in statewide organizations for librarians, technology coordinators, and PowerSchool users throughout my career.

His involvement demonstrated that learning doesn’t end when formal education is complete. There is always something new to learn and someone willing to share their knowledge.

As I look back, I realize that many of the things I value most—curiosity, perseverance, and lifelong learning—came from the example my father set. For that, I remain grateful.

Monday's Diggings

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 22, 2026
Mentzer,Woodson_County
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/22/mondays-diggings-36/

Mentzer Marriages in Woodson County, Kansas

One of the joys of genealogy is rediscovering forgotten treasures tucked away in our files. Sometimes those treasures are original records. Other times they are handwritten notes created during a research trip years ago. Today's Monday's Diggings features one of those handwritten finds.

While sorting through my files, I came across two pages titled **"Woodson County Marriages, 1860–1985 – Mentzer."** The pages contain a handwritten transcription of marriage records involving individuals with the surname Mentzer from Woodson County, Kansas.

Unlike many old notes in my collection, I do remember where this information originated. The entries were copied from the book **Woodson County Marriages, 1860–1985** located in the Woodson County Clerk's Office at the courthouse in Yates Center, Kansas. At some point during a courthouse visit, I transcribed the entries pertaining to the Mentzer surname and later filed the notes away.

Although I did not make photocopies of the original pages from the book, these handwritten notes preserve information that may otherwise have remained buried in my files. The entries identify several Mentzer family members and provide marriage dates, spouses, ages, and references to the original marriage books.

For descendants of the Mentzer family, this list offers a useful starting point for locating the original marriage records and reconstructing family relationships.

Transcription

Mentzer Marriages

First Column

- Mentzer, Charles O., 24
  Wells, Nettie A., 20
  18 Oct 1893 — E-180

- Mentzer, Clarence Albert, 27
  Graham, Grace, 23
  07 May 1913 — I-438
- Mentzer, Ernest E., 30
  Dumond, Edith M., legal
  01 June 1910 — I-125
- Mentzer, E. T., 24
  Schooling, Lorene, 22
  01 June 1938 — N-405
- Mentzer, George F., 23
  Wells, Anna M., 23
  27 March 1895 — E-315
- Mentzer, Harley W., 23
  McCormick, Winiford, 21
  09 May 1928 — L-451
- Mentzer, Henry, 28
  Litton, May, 25
  25 June 1903 — G-240
- Mentzer, Howard, 22
  Peterson, Edna, 19
  15 Feb 1932 — M-263
- Mentzer, Jerry Lee, 19
  Gregg, Linda Marie, 20
  29 July 1967 — R-81

Second Column

- Mentzer, Ledlie George, 25
  Danielson, Veota Marie, 23
  16 Apr 1924 — L-125
- Mentzer, Loren, 26
  Schaich, Etta Beth, 22
  01 Sept 1940 — O-133
- Mentzer, Merrill Burdette, 27
  Stout, Marie Hazel, 20
  07 July 1946 — O-630
- Mentzer, Norryce, 28
  Cook, Alberta Mae, 18
  15 Jan 1950 — P-306
- Mentzer, Paul E., 25
  Saferite, Ada E., 26
  25 Aug 1921 — K-319
- Mentzer, Phillip E., 28
  Schoepflin, Anna M., 26
  25 Oct 1905 — H-85
- Tolle, Wendell, 23
  Mentzer, Aleta Doris, 24
  22 Nov 1933 — M-416
- Beine, Emil F., 28
  Mentzer, Cecil M., 25
  06 Apr 1923 — L-21

Additional Mentzer Marriages

First Column

- Williams, John W., 24
  Mentzer, Clara E., 20
  02 Apr 1903 — G-220
- Van Valkenburg, John L., 24
  Mentzer, Mildred, 22
  7 Apr 1929 — M-48
- Herold, Edward R., 32
  Mentzer, Hazel A., 26
  30 Nov 1922 — K-427
- Wiede, Paul, 23
  Mentzer, Marjorie, 25
  08 May 1925 — L-216

Second Column

- Van Valkenburg, Ralph Leon, 30
  Mentzer, Fletha Frances, 23
  19 May 1937 — N-292
- Laymon, Richard Lee, 20
  Mentzer, Ruth Ann, 20
  03 May 1953 — Q-14

Why I’m Preserving These Notes

Research notes such as these may not be as exciting as an original marriage license, but they can still be valuable. The ages help distinguish between individuals of the same name, while the marriage dates help establish family timelines. The book and page references provide clues for locating the original records.

These pages also serve as a reminder that courthouse research can produce information that remains useful decades later. A few handwritten pages copied from a marriage index at the Woodson County Courthouse have preserved a snapshot of the Mentzer family’s history that I can now share with other researchers.

As I continue to work through old files, I am reminded that not every discovery is a newly found record. Sometimes the treasure is simply rediscovering research I completed years ago and making it available to a new generation of family historians.

Have you uncovered old courthouse notes in your files that still provide valuable clues today?

Why Did Albert Hutchinson Desert?

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 23, 2026
Artificial Intelligence,Civil War,Hutchinson
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/23/why-did-albert-hutchinson-desert/

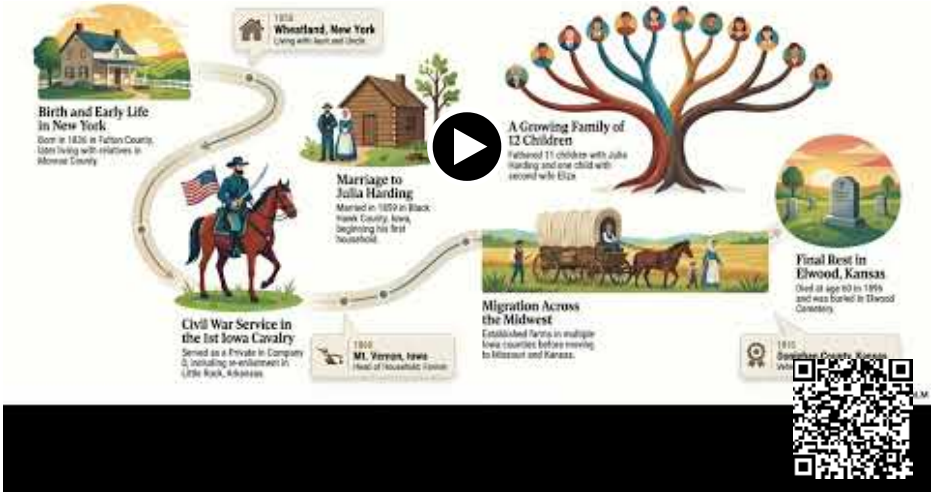
Did Albert Hutchinson Desert for Family or for the Harvest?

One of the things I enjoy about using artificial intelligence tools with genealogy is that they sometimes encourage me to look at familiar records in a new way.

Recently, after working through several issues involving the interpretation of Albert Hutchinson's family information, I finally generated a Google NotebookLM audio overview that accurately reflected the details in my research. Using that audio overview and a companion infographic, I created a video that has now been uploaded to YouTube.

You can watch the video below.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=bNhL23dViY8


Wheatland, New York
Birth and Early Life in New York
Marriage to Julia Harding
A Growing Family of 12 Children
Civil War Service in the 1st Iowa Cavalry
Mt. Vernon, Iowa
Migration Across the Midwest
Final Rest in Elwood, Kansas

Replace this text with the YouTube embed code when publishing.

A Curious Detail in Albert's Military Record

My second great-grandfather, Albert Hutchinson, served in Company D of the 1st Iowa Cavalry during the Civil War.

Among the details found in his military and pension records is a notation that part of his bounty payment was withheld because he was absent without leave from June 18, 1864, through June 30, 1864.

That two-week absence caught the attention of Google NotebookLM.

When creating the audio overview, the AI connected Albert's brief desertion to an important family event. His son, William Henry Hutchinson, was born on March 2, 1865. Working backward, the timing places the likely conception of William during the summer of 1864, very close to Albert's documented absence.

The resulting narrative suggests that Albert may have left his unit in order to visit his wife and family.

It's an intriguing possibility.

Another Possible Explanation

However, a previous audio overview generated by NotebookLM highlighted a different possibility.

Albert was a farmer before the war and returned to farming afterward. His absence occurred in late June, which would have been an important agricultural period in Iowa.

For many nineteenth-century farmers, late June and early July marked the beginning of winter wheat harvest. A successful harvest could mean the difference between prosperity and hardship for a family.

Could Albert have returned home to help with the harvest?

The timing certainly fits.

Of course, there is a problem with both explanations.

I have no direct evidence proving why Albert was absent from his unit.

His military records document the absence, but they do not explain his motivation.

The Difference Between Evidence and Interpretation

This example illustrates one of the strengths—and one of the limitations—of AI-generated historical narratives.

The military record provides a fact:

- Albert Hutchinson was absent without leave from June 18–30, 1864.

The birth of his son provides another fact:

- William Henry Hutchinson was born on March 2, 1865.

The agricultural calendar provides still another fact:

- Late June was harvest season for many Iowa farmers.

What AI does is connect those facts into a story.

Sometimes those connections are reasonable. Sometimes they may even be correct. But unless additional evidence is found, they remain interpretations rather than proven conclusions.

As genealogists, we must be careful not to confuse a plausible explanation with documented fact.

Why I Still Find AI Valuable

Even though I cannot prove why Albert left his unit for those two weeks, NotebookLM helped me see the event from multiple perspectives.

One version emphasized Albert's role as a husband and father.

Another emphasized his role as a farmer responsible for providing for his family.

Both possibilities prompted me to think more deeply about the circumstances surrounding that brief absence.

Whether Albert returned home because of family obligations, farming responsibilities, or some entirely different reason, the incident serves as a reminder that our ancestors were real people facing difficult choices during extraordinary times.

A Soldier, Farmer, and Family Man

The surviving records reveal only a small glimpse of Albert Hutchinson's life, but they also remind us that every notation in a military file has a human story behind it.

Sometimes we know that story.

Sometimes we can only speculate.

And sometimes artificial intelligence encourages us to ask questions we might not have considered before.

For now, the reason behind Albert's brief absence remains an open question. But it is a question worth exploring, because understanding the choices our ancestors faced helps us better understand the lives they lived.

Using AI in Genealogy

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 24, 2026
Artificial Intelligence
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/24/using-ai-in-genealogy/

Trust, Verify, and Think Like a Genealogist

Over the past six months, I have spent a considerable amount of time experimenting with various artificial intelligence tools. Some of these tools have become regular parts of my genealogy workflow, helping me transcribe records, summarize documents, create biographies, generate historical context, and even produce audio and video content.

Along the way, I've learned that AI can be both incredibly helpful and surprisingly misleading.

Recently, I asked ChatGPT what advice it would give to a genealogist who is just beginning to use AI tools. The response resonated with me because it reflected many of the lessons I've learned through trial and error.

The most important piece of advice was simple:

> Treat AI as a research assistant, not as a source.

That one principle can help genealogists avoid many of the mistakes that AI can introduce into family history research.

Transcription Errors Are Easy to Spot

Most genealogists quickly learn that AI-generated transcriptions are not perfect.

A surname may be misread.

A date may be transcribed incorrectly.

A place name may be misunderstood.

Fortunately, these errors are often easy to identify because we can compare the transcription to the original document image.

When the transcription doesn't match the record, we can make corrections.

The more challenging errors occur when AI goes beyond transcription.

The Problem of Assumptions

AI tools are designed to recognize patterns and make predictions. Sometimes those predictions are useful. Sometimes they are not.

For example, an AI-generated biography might state that an individual worked as a farmer because he was living in a farming community.

A video might imply that an ancestor traveled a particular migration route because that route was commonly used.

Neither statement may be supported by actual evidence.

The problem is that these assumptions often sound reasonable.

As genealogists, we are trained to distinguish between facts and conclusions. AI-generated content deserves the same level of scrutiny that we apply to online family trees, published genealogies, and county histories.

Whenever AI presents a conclusion, it is worth asking:

> What evidence supports this statement?

If the answer cannot be traced back to a document, then the statement should be treated as a hypothesis rather than a fact.

Images Can Be Misleading

One lesson I learned while experimenting with AI-generated videos is that images can create misleading impressions.

A video discussing an ancestor's life may display photographs of people, places, or buildings that are not actually connected to the individual being discussed.

In one case, a video discussing a Kentucky family displayed imagery associated with Indiana. The narration was accurate, but the images suggested something that the evidence did not support.

Viewers often remember images more readily than words.

Because of that, genealogists should be especially cautious when using AI-generated images, maps, and videos.

Unless an image can be tied to a documented source, it should be viewed as an illustration rather than evidence.

Maps Deserve Careful Review

Maps are another area where AI can unintentionally create confusion.

Modern maps may not reflect historical boundaries.

County lines changed.

States were created.

Roads appeared and disappeared.

Migration routes varied.

An AI-generated map may be visually appealing while still presenting an inaccurate picture of an ancestor's journey.

As with any other genealogy source, maps should be verified before they are accepted as accurate representations of historical events.

Historical Context Is Not Evidence

One of AI's greatest strengths is providing historical context.

For example, AI can explain:

- How settlers moved westward.
- What transportation options were available.
- What military units experienced during a war.
- What life was like in a particular community.

This context helps us better understand our ancestors.

However, context is not evidence.

The fact that many settlers traveled a particular route does not prove that our ancestor did.

The fact that many farmers grew wheat does not prove that our ancestor did.

Historical context can help us understand possibilities, but documents are still required to establish facts.

Use AI for What It Does Best

Despite these cautions, I remain enthusiastic about using AI in genealogy.

In my experience, AI is most valuable when it helps researchers:

- Organize evidence
- Summarize lengthy documents
- Build timelines
- Identify inconsistencies
- Develop research plans
- Compare competing theories
- Generate questions for further investigation

These tasks complement the work genealogists already do.

AI can help us think through a problem, but it cannot replace careful analysis of the records themselves.

Think Like a Genealogist

Experienced genealogists already know how to evaluate evidence.

We question family stories.

We verify published information.

We compare sources.

We recognize conflicts.

Those same skills are essential when working with AI.

The most successful use of AI in genealogy is not blind acceptance of its output.

Instead, it is a partnership in which the genealogist remains responsible for evaluating evidence and drawing conclusions.

AI can suggest possibilities.

It can help organize information.

It can even help us see patterns we might otherwise miss.

But the records remain the foundation of our research.

As I continue exploring AI tools, I've come to appreciate them as powerful assistants. They can save time, uncover clues, and help organize complex projects.

At the same time, they remind me of a lesson genealogists have always known:

Trust, but verify.

Color Me Confused!

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 25, 2026
Hutchinson,New York
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/25/color-me-confused/

Have you ever come across a deed or probate record that named dozens of heirs? If so, were you able to determine how they were all related?

In a recent post, I discussed an Ancestry hint that led me to a published Hutchinson family history. That history referenced the settlement of the estate of Lewis N. Hutchinson and stated that my ancestor, Albert Hutchinson, was identified as one of Lewis's heirs.

Naturally, I wanted to see the original documents.

So far, I have not located the document that specifically names Albert Hutchinson. However, I did find an 1885 deed involving the estate of Lewis N. Hutchinson of Wheatland, Monroe County, New York, who died intestate. Since Lewis left no will, the deed contains a lengthy list of his heirs-at-law and next of kin.

At first glance, the list was overwhelming. Some individuals were listed under their maiden names, others under married names, and several appeared only with a surname that was unfamiliar to me. The deed included names such as Miranda Treat, Octavia Harmon, Mary Rupert, Hannah Jackson Coleman, Delia Mercer, Sarah Townsend, and many others. Determining how these people fit into the Hutchinson family was far from obvious.

To help untangle the relationships, I turned to ChatGPT. Using a copy of the deed along with a RootsMagic descendancy report for Aaron Hutchinson—the father of Lewis N. Hutchinson—I asked ChatGPT to compare the names in the deed with the descendants in my database.

The results provided a roadmap. Armed with those suggested connections, I began comparing the names with individuals in the FamilySearch Family Tree. Many of the heirs could be identified as children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or grandnieces and grandnephews of Lewis Hutchinson.

What emerged was a fascinating picture of the Hutchinson family spread across several generations.

Descendants of Hollom Hutchinson

(Brother of Lewis N. Hutchinson)

- Lewis Hutchinson — LL48-Y6S
- Jane Hutchinson — 98NJ-JD8
- Myron Hutchinson — LL48-R5N

- Joslyn Hutchinson
- Wells Hutchinson
- Elizabeth Hutchinson

Descendants of Cynthia Hutchinson Finch

(Sister of Lewis N. Hutchinson)

- Miranda Treat — GSFX-94D
- Octavia Harmon — 93D7-P95
- Frank Finch — G45V-JC7

Grandchildren through Cynthia's daughter Eliza Finch Rupert

- Mary Rupert
- Wells Rupert — L659-7VB

Samantha Hutchinson Keyes

(Sister of Lewis N. Hutchinson)

- Samantha Keyes — LKT5-95C

Descendants of Hannah Hutchinson Jackson

(Sister of Lewis N. Hutchinson)

- Harlow Jackson — PDRW-P5Y
- Dwight Jackson
- Hannah Jackson Coleman — PDR4-VB3
- Andrew Jackson
- Lewis Jackson — PDRW-RBN

Descendants of Laura Hutchinson Lamphier

(Sister of Lewis N. Hutchinson)

- Delia Mercer — LL4M-SRM
- Mary Richardson
- John A. Lamphier — 9Z75-CYC
- Sarah Townsend — LV5W-V7T

Grandchildren through George W. Lamphier

- Edward A. Lamphier — 9XJD-JYL
- Le Dran B. Lamphier
- Lydia C. Wood
- Edward Lamphier
- Mary Delia Lamphier — L83V-KZV
- Delia Lamphier
- George Lamphier — 9DC2-543

Additional descendants include:

- Milton Townsend
- Julius S. Barber

Descendants of Polly Hutchinson Sutliff

(Sister of Lewis N. Hutchinson)

Children of Milo Sutliff and Adaline Pratt

- Morris Sutliff — LZRK-RG1
- Dora M. Sutliff (wife of Morris; Isadore M. Sackett — G9KM-7R2)
- William E. Sutliff — LZRK-RRW
- Maud Sutliff — LZRK-RTN
- Bessie D. Sutliff — G9G8-1SS

- Charles Sutliff — KN7K-CKP

Children of Milo Sutliff and Elmina Dickinson

- Milo H. Sutliff — GV2S-54T
- Elmina D. Sutliff — LYZK-NPN
- Viola E. Sutliff — LYZK-VDK

Descendants of Hope Sutliff Harmon

- H. Charles Harmon — LZR1-C7W
- Julius Harmon — LZR1-C4C

As I worked through the list, I was able to identify most of the heirs on the FamilySearch tree. The deed essentially became a roadmap to additional descendants of Aaron Hutchinson and Hannah Nettleton.

The process also raised new questions. Several heirs named in the deed were not immediately identifiable in either my database or the FamilySearch tree. Are they descendants who have been overlooked? Were some listed under married names that I have not yet connected to the family? Or are there branches of the family that have simply not been researched?

For now, I have attached the deed as a source to the descendants I could identify. My next step is to investigate the remaining heirs and determine exactly how they fit into the Hutchinson family.

What began as a confusing list of names is gradually turning into a valuable clue for expanding and documenting the descendants of Aaron Hutchinson and Hannah Nettleton. Sometimes the most confusing documents are the ones that provide the greatest genealogical rewards.

Friday Find

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 26, 2026
Crawford
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/26/friday-find-122/

Do you have Bible records buried in your files that don't belong to your direct ancestral line? Today's Friday Find is one such record.

The record is from an Oliver family Bible and contains information about Martha Jane Crawford Oliver and her family. While Martha is not one of my ancestors, she was the daughter of Harvey Harrison Crawford and the granddaughter of James Crawford and Martha Knight.

Anyone who has followed my Crawford research knows that there were multiple men named James Crawford living in Kentucky and Ohio during the same time period. My ancestor was James Crawford who married Sally Smith, while Martha's grandfather was the "other" James Crawford—the James Crawford who married Martha Knight. Because the lives of these two men intersect in many records, I have spent considerable time researching both families.

In 2003, I received photocopies of several pages from this Bible from Mrs. Shirley Oliver. Included with the images was a note explaining the Bible's history:

> These are some pages from a Bible which was presented to Rachel Williams Oliver by her mother 8 Sept. 1853.

The note further states that Rachel Williams Oliver was the second wife of John S. Oliver.

Although the photocopies are faded and difficult to read in places, modern tools helped make the record more accessible. With the assistance of ChatGPT, I was able to create an initial transcription of the pages and then review and correct the results. The Bible preserves births, marriages, and deaths for members of the Williams, Oliver, Crawford and related families.

Since Bible records are often difficult for researchers to access, I am including the complete transcription below in hopes that it may help descendants of these families.

Family Record — Deaths

Catherine Garder
died Aprial the 12 AD 1880

Martha J. Oliver died
November the 2, 1860

Mary E. Oliver, daughter of J& MJ Oliver, died Nov. the 10, 1860

John S. Oliver died November the 2, 1899

Rachel Oliver died January the 6, 1911

Rachel Oliver the wife of

John S Oliver

Family Record

Births

John S. Oliver was born June the 24, 1824

Martha J. Oliver was born Oct. the 23 1835

Mary E. Oliver, first daughter of J S and M J Oliver was born Apr the 28th A D 1853

Nancy R. Oliver, sec daughter of J S & M J Oliver was born May 25, 1855

Harvey D. Oliver, first son was born March the 16, 1857

Francis M. Oliver, second son was born Dec. the [2]6, 1858

Rufus E. Oliver, was born May th 26 A.D. 1865, son of J Sand Rachel Oliver

John Blackford was borned Jan. the 25, A.D. 1793

Hannah Halsey was born Aug. the 12, 1793

Deaths

A – illegible line

Elizabeth [Freeman] died August 16, 1847

JuliannWilliams died in June [11], 1829

Mary Bloomfield died March the 23, 1837, aged eight years

John B. Williams
departed this life in
November the 26, 1851

Rachel Williams
departed this life in
September the 21, 1853

Susanah S Litch[iser]
departed this life on
July the 30 185[3]

John Blackstone
died Oct. the [6 1866]

Hannah Black[tone]
died June the 22, 1871

Family Record

Marriages

Left Column

John B. Williams and
Rachel Halsey was
married Feby 13, 1808

Juliann Williams and
Isaac Bloomfield was
married May. 6th, 1827

David R Clevenger and
Catharine Williams was
married Sept. 1[6]th, 1829

Apelton **Garry** and
Susanna S Williams was
married August 1[0]th, 1834

Abraham P. Baldwin and
Mary E. Williams was
married Oct 28th, 1838

William [P] Hazelti**ne** and
Lydia Williams was
married Feby 18 1849

Right Column

Samuel H. [Jekinson] and
Hannah b. Williams was
married Feby 15, 1845

John S. Williams and
Susanah [Letchiser] was
married 18 August 1852

Thomas D[ox]ey and
Maria R. Williams
was married July
the 1, 1855

John S. Oliver and
Martha J. Crawford
was married April the 14 1852

J S Oliver and **Rachel Williams**
his second wife was
married Aug. the 19, 1863

Harvey D. Oliver and
Elizabeth Putman
was married Sept
the second A.D. 1880

[F]. M. Oliver and
[Lettie?] Snedl**ey**
was married Feb.
the 26 18[9]4

While this Bible record contains only a small amount of information about Martha Jane Crawford Oliver, it may provide an important clue for identifying the family of John S. Oliver's second wife, Rachel Williams [G3P3-2RQ].

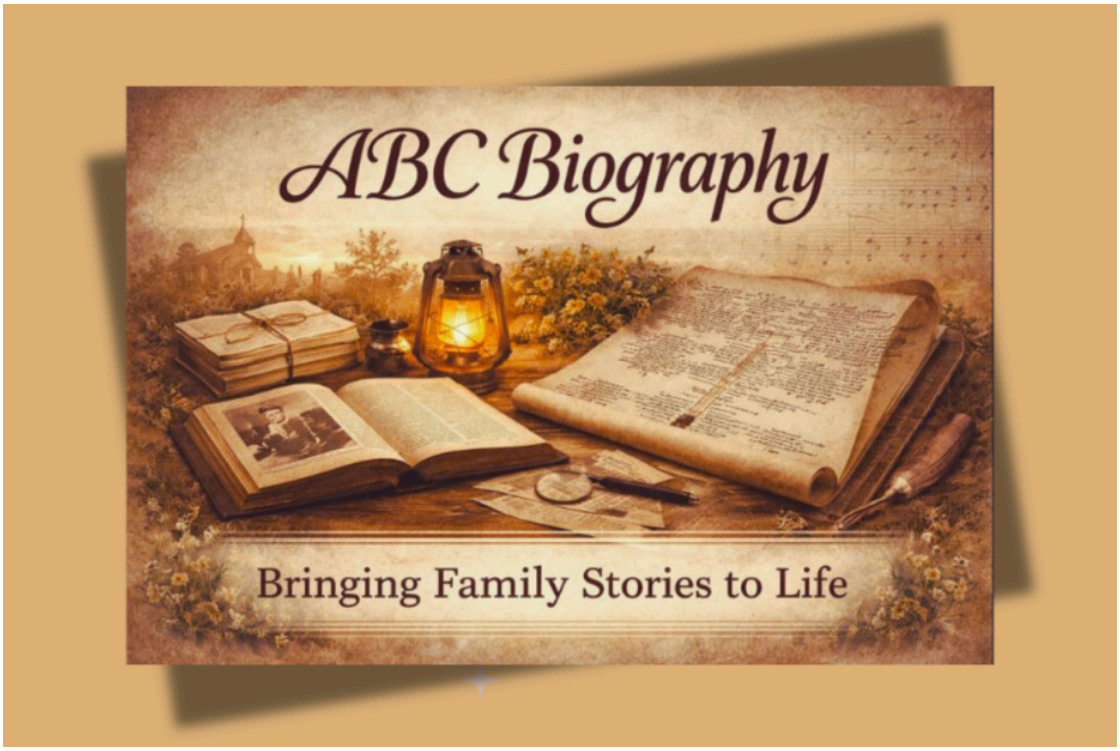
The marriages page includes several Williams family marriages, including that of John B. Williams [K2MS-WYB]. When I located Rachel Williams in the FamilySearch Family Tree, I found that she was not connected to parents or siblings. The presence of multiple Williams entries in a Bible that was reportedly presented to Rachel Williams Oliver by her mother suggests that many of the individuals named in the record may belong to her extended family.

Although I was unable to confidently connect all of the people named in the Bible to individuals in the FamilySearch Family Tree, I attached the images and transcription to the profiles of Martha Jane Crawford Oliver, Rachel Williams, and John B. Williams. Perhaps another researcher familiar with the Williams family will recognize the relationships that I could not.

That is one of the rewards of preserving and sharing family records. A document that sat quietly in my files for more than twenty years may contain the missing clue another researcher needs to extend their family tree. By making this Bible record available, I hope it will help descendants of the Oliver, Williams, Crawford, and related families uncover more of their story.

Julia Harding Hutchinson

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 27, 2026
ABC Biography,Harding,Hutchinson,Iowa,Kansas
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/27/julia-harding-hutchinson/



From New Brunswick to the Kansas Frontier

When researching our ancestors, it is easy to focus on the men who served in the military, homesteaded land, or appeared frequently in legal records. Their wives often appear only briefly in the surviving documents. Yet those women were essential to the family's story.

One such woman was my 2nd great-grandmother, **Julia Harding Hutchinson**. While reviewing a RootsMagic narrative report, I was reminded that Julia's life spanned an era of remarkable change. She was born in Canada, helped raise a large family on the Iowa frontier, endured the years when her husband served in the Civil War, and eventually moved west to Kansas.

A Childhood in New Brunswick

Julia Harding was born in 1840 in New Brunswick, Canada, the daughter of **William Gillies Harding**.

The 1851 census places eleven-year-old Julia in her father's household in Westfield, Kings County, New Brunswick. Living with her were siblings Caroline, Abel, Thomas, Abijah, Isabella, and Henry. The family lived along the Saint John River during a period when New Brunswick was still a British colony, years before Canada became a nation in 1867.

At some point during her youth, Julia left Canada and moved with her family to Iowa, joining the steady stream of migrants seeking new opportunities in the American Midwest.

Marriage to Albert Hutchinson

On September 14, 1859, Julia married **Albert Hutchinson** in Black Hawk County, Iowa.

Albert had been born about 1836 in Fulton County, New York, the son of Aaron Hutchinson and Sarah Merry. Like many young couples on the frontier, Albert and Julia began their married life with few possessions but plenty of hope for the future.

The 1860 census shows the newly married couple living in Mount Vernon Township, Black Hawk County, Iowa. Also living in the household was Julia's younger sister, Isabella Harding, suggesting that family connections remained important even after the move west.

A Civil War Wife

Just three years after their marriage, the Civil War interrupted the family's life.

Albert enlisted in Company D of the 1st Iowa Cavalry and served from 1862 until 1866. During those years, Julia remained at home caring for their growing family.

Their son, **Albert G. Hutchinson**, was born in June 1862, shortly before Albert entered military service. Another son, **William Henry Hutchinson**, was born in March 1865 as the war was drawing to a close.

Like thousands of women across the North, Julia faced the challenge of maintaining the household and caring for young children while her husband was away. Although military records tell Albert's story, they also remind us of the sacrifices made by the families left behind.

Building a Family

Julia and Albert spent much of their married life in northern Iowa, living in Black Hawk, Bremer, and Mitchell Counties.

Together they raised a large family:

- Gertrude Hutchinson (1860–1914)
- Albert G. Hutchinson (1862–1922)
- William Henry Hutchinson (1865–1936)
- Frederick Hutchinson (born about 1867)
- Cary Hutchinson (born about 1869)
- Winifred Mae "Winnie" Hutchinson (1871–1913)
- Elnora Hutchinson (1874–1921)
- Guy Thomas Hutchinson (1876–1946)
- Francesca Hutchinson (born 1879)
- Howard Hutchinson (born 1881)
- Elvira Hutchinson (born about 1884)

Several of these children would later establish families of their own in Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas. One daughter, **Winifred Mae "Winnie" Hutchinson**, became the wife of my great-grandfather, **Hiram Miles Currey**.

Life on the Iowa Frontier

Census records offer snapshots of Julia's life as wife, mother, and homemaker.

In 1870, the family was living in Bremer County, Iowa, with five children at home. By 1880 they had moved to Mitchell County, where Julia and Albert were still raising a household full of children.

The 1885 Iowa State Census shows several older children entering adulthood while younger children remained at home. It was a busy household that undoubtedly required hard work from every member of the family.

These years coincided with major changes across Iowa. Railroads connected rural communities to larger markets, towns expanded, and agriculture became increasingly important to the state's economy. Families like the Hutchinsons were helping build the communities that would shape Iowa's future.

A Final Move to Kansas

By the early 1890s, the Hutchinson family had moved to Doniphan County, Kansas.

The move was part of a larger pattern of westward migration that affected many Midwestern families. New land, economic opportunities, and growing communities encouraged families to continue moving westward even after decades in Iowa.

Unfortunately, Julia would not have much time to enjoy her new home.

Julia's Death

Julia Harding Hutchinson died on January 4, 1892, in Doniphan County, Kansas, at the age of fifty-two.

Her death ended a marriage of more than thirty-two years. During those years she had crossed an international border, endured the Civil War, raised a large family, and participated in the settlement of both Iowa and Kansas.

Albert survived her by only a few years, dying in 1896.

Remembering Julia

While Julia left behind fewer records than her husband, her influence can still be seen in the lives of her children and descendants.

The records reveal a woman who spent much of her life caring for family during a period of constant change. From the Saint John River in New Brunswick to the prairies of Iowa and Kansas, Julia Harding Hutchinson's story reflects the experiences of countless nineteenth-century women whose contributions were rarely recorded in detail but whose impact was felt for generations.

As genealogists, it is important to remember that family history is not only about soldiers, landowners, and public officials. It is also about the women who held families together, raised children, and helped build communities. Julia Harding Hutchinson was one of those women, and her story deserves to be remembered.

Saturday Night Genealogy Fun

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 28, 2026
Foster,Maryland,Revolutionary_War
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/28/saturday-night-genealogy-fun-204/

Remembering John Foster and the Maryland Flying Camp

Calling all Genea-Musings Fans:

It's Saturday Night again –

Time for some more Genealogy Fun!!

Here is your assignment if you choose to play along (cue the *Mission Impossible* music, please!):

1. We all have ancestors who were alive in 1776, and some of them may have celebrated the signing of the Declaration of Independence or even served in the military during the War.
2. Describe one or more of your ancestors who lived in that time or served in the military.

With Independence Day just around the corner, this week's challenge seemed like the perfect opportunity to highlight one of my Revolutionary War patriots.

Rather than write about all of them (I'll be doing that in a separate Fourth of July post), I decided to focus on **John Foster**, whose military service is documented in the records of the Maryland Archives.

John Foster's Revolutionary War Service

John Foster served as a **private in Captain Peter Mantz's Company** from Frederick County, Maryland. His name appears on the enrollment list for the company, preserved in the Maryland Archives, placing him among the men who volunteered during the summer of 1776.

Seeing an ancestor's name on an original muster roll always brings history a little closer. Instead of simply reading that John "served in the Revolution," I can picture him standing alongside his neighbors as they answered the call to defend the newly declared United States.

The Maryland Flying Camp

Captain Mantz's company was part of what became known as the **Maryland Flying Camp**.

Created by the Continental Congress in June 1776, the Flying Camp was intended to be a mobile reserve force. Rather than remaining close to home like many local militia companies, these soldiers could be sent wherever General George Washington most needed reinforcements. Maryland agreed to furnish approximately 3,400 men for this temporary force, who enlisted to serve through the end of 1776.

The name "Flying Camp" might sound unusual today, but it simply referred to a force that could move quickly to respond to changing military situations. In modern terms, it was something like a rapid-response unit.

Preparing for War

The records surrounding Captain Mantz's company offer an interesting glimpse into the realities of raising an army.

The enrollment list shows that the company had nearly ninety men by early July 1776. Correspondence between Maryland officials reveals that the company still needed basic military supplies before it could march. They lacked enough canteens, camp kettles, firearms, and money to purchase additional equipment.

It's easy to imagine the excitement surrounding the Declaration of Independence, but these records remind us that the new nation also faced enormous logistical challenges. Armies needed clothing, weapons, cooking equipment, transportation, and funding—all while preparing to confront one of the world's strongest military powers.

Marching North

Once organized, Captain Mantz's company received orders to move from Frederick County. After assembling elsewhere in Maryland, the company eventually marched north to Philadelphia, where the Maryland Flying Camp joined Washington's army during one of the most difficult periods of the Revolutionary War.

Although many Flying Camp enlistments lasted only until December 1776, these soldiers helped reinforce the Continental Army as it struggled through the New York campaign during the first year of American independence.

Remembering an Ordinary Patriot

John Foster was not a famous general or a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was one of thousands of ordinary citizens who left home to serve when his country needed him.

For me, that's one of the joys of genealogy. A single name on a muster roll transforms an ancestor from a name on a pedigree chart into a real person who stood at an extraordinary moment in history.

As we celebrate Independence Day, I'm grateful to remember John Foster and the many other ordinary men and women whose sacrifices helped shape the nation we know today.

Monday's Diggings

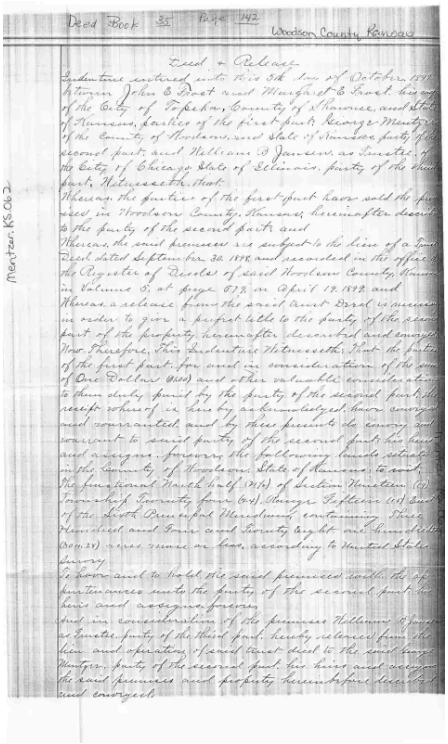
By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 29, 2026
Mentzer
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/29/diggings/

George Mentzer Purchases 304 Acres in Woodson County

One of the joys of genealogy research is finding records that place an ancestor in a specific location at a specific point in time. Land records are especially valuable because they can document residency, property ownership, financial transactions, and family relationships. This week's Monday's Diggings focuses on a deed recorded in Woodson County, Kansas, in October 1899 involving my ancestor, **George Mentzer**.

The Record

The deed was recorded in **Deed Book 35, pages 142–143**, in the Woodson County Register of Deeds office. Dated **5 October 1899**, the document records a transaction between **John E. Frost and Margaret E. Frost of Topeka, Kansas**, and **George Mentzer of Woodson County, Kansas**.


Deed Book 35 Page 142 Woodson County Kansas

Deed + Release

Indentures entered into this 5th day of October 1898 between John B Dent and Margaret E Dent husband and wife of the City of Topeka, County of Shawnee, and State of Kansas, parties of the first part, George Mentzer of the County of Woodson, and State of Kansas party of the second part, and William O Jansen, as Trustee of the City of Chicago State of Illinois, party of the third part. Witnesseth that

Whereas, the parties of the first part have sold the premises in Woodson County, Kansas, hereinafter described to the party of the second part, and

Whereas, the said premises are subject to the lien of a Trust Deed dated September 30, 1898 and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds of said Woodson County, Kansas in Volume 5 at page 873 on April 19, 1899, and

Whereas, a release from the said Trust Deed is necessary in order to give a perfect title to the party of the second part of the property hereinafter described and conveyed.

Now Therefore, This Indentures Witnesseth, That the parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of One Dollar ($1.00) and other valuable consideration to them duly paid by the party of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have granted and conveyed and by these presents do convey and warrant to said party of the second part his heirs and assigns forever, the following lands situate in the County of Woodson, State of Kansas, to wit,

The fractional North half (N½) of Section Nineteen (19) Township Twenty four (24) Range Fifteen (15) East of the Sixth Principal Meridian containing Three Hundred and Four and Twenty eight one hundredth (304.28) acres more or less, according to United States survey

To have and to hold the said premises with the appurtenances unto the party of the second part his heirs and assigns forever.

And in consideration of the premises the said party of the third part hereby releases from the lien and operation of said trust deed to the said George Mentzer, party of the second part his heirs and assigns the said premises and property hereinafter described and conveyed

Figure 1. First page of the George Mentzer deed, Woodson County Deed Book 35, page 142.

The deed describes the property as:

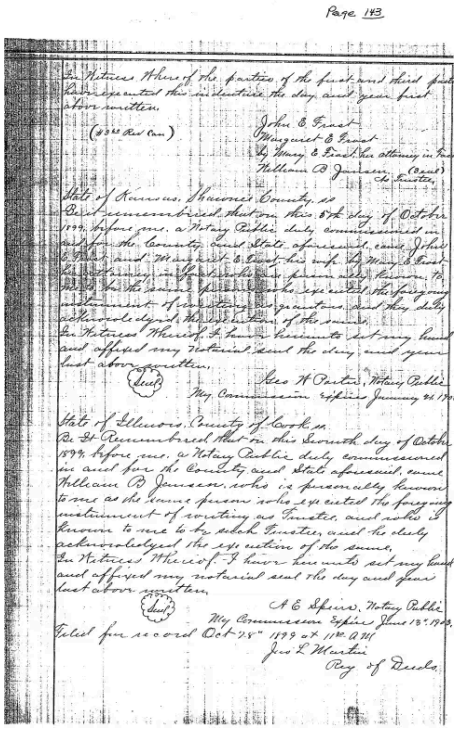
> The fractional north half of Section 19, Township 24, Range 15 East of the Sixth Principal Meridian, containing 304.28 acres, more or less.

This tract was located in Woodson County and represented a substantial amount of land for a Kansas farmer at the close of the nineteenth century.

More Than a Simple Land Sale

At first glance, this appears to be a routine land transfer. However, a closer reading reveals that the property was subject to a previously recorded **Trust Deed**, dated 30 September 1898. Because of that encumbrance, a third party was involved in the transaction.

The deed identifies **William O. Jansen of Chicago, Illinois**, as trustee. His role was to formally release the property from the lien of the trust deed so that George Mentzer could receive clear title to the land.



Page 143

In Witness Whereof the parties of the first and third part have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

(Seal) John C. Frost
Margaret C. Frost
By Mary C. Frost Her attorney in fact
William A. Jamison (Seal)
As Trustee

State of Kansas, Shawnee County, ss
Be it remembered that on this 6th day of October 1899 before me, a Notary Public duly commissioned in and for the County and State aforesaid, came John C. Frost and Margaret C. Frost his wife, by Mary C. Frost their attorney in fact, personally known to me to be the same persons who executed the foregoing instrument of writing as grantors, and they duly acknowledged the execution of the same.
In Witness Whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my Notarial seal the day and year last above written.

(Seal) Geo. W. Carter, Notary Public
My Commission expires January 21 1901

State of Illinois, County of Cook ss
Be it Remembered that on this Seventh day of October 1899 before me, a Notary Public duly commissioned in and for the County and State aforesaid, came William A. Jamison, who is personally known to me as the same person who executed the foregoing instrument of writing as Trustee, and who is known to me to be such Trustee, and he duly acknowledged the execution of the same.
In Witness Whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal the day and year last above written.

(Seal) A. E. Shipley, Notary Public
My Commission Expires June 18th 1900.

Filed for record Oct 18th 1899 at 11 o'clock A.M.
Jno L. Martin
Reg of Deeds

Figure 2. Second page of the George Mentzer deed, Woodson County Deed Book 35, page 143.

The document states that the release was necessary:

> "…in order to give a perfect title to the party of the second part…"

Thus, the deed served two purposes: transferring ownership to George Mentzer and clearing the property's title.

What Does This Record Tell Us?

While the deed does not identify family members, it does provide several important clues:

- George Mentzer was living in Woodson County by October 1899.
- He acquired ownership of a sizeable tract consisting of more than 300 acres.
- The land had previously been owned by John and Margaret Frost of Topeka.
- The transaction involved financing or security arrangements that required the release of a trust deed.
- The legal process extended beyond Kansas, involving a trustee located in Chicago, Illinois.

The deed was acknowledged before notaries in both Kansas and Illinois and was finally recorded in Woodson County on **18 October 1899**.

Why Land Records Matter

Land records often provide a framework for understanding an ancestor's life. Census records may tell us where a person lived, but deeds can reveal when property was acquired, sold, inherited, or mortgaged. They can also help track migrations, establish residency, and place individuals in a community between census years.

For George Mentzer, this deed documents an important milestone: ownership of a substantial Woodson County farm at the turn of the twentieth century.

Final Thoughts

This deed may seem like a routine legal document, but it helps paint a clearer picture of George Mentzer's life in Kansas. Each land record adds another piece to the puzzle, helping transform a name on a pedigree chart into a person who worked the land, made financial decisions, and built a life for his family.

Have you discovered a deed or land record that helped you better understand an ancestor's story? I'd love to hear about it in the comments.

Complete Transcription

as done by ChatGPT from images

Deed Book 35 – Page 142
Woodson County, Kansas

Deed of Release

Indenture entered into this 5th day of October, 1899 between **John E. Frost** and **Margaret E. Frost** his wife of the City of Topeka, County of Shawnee, and State of Kansas, parties of the first part; **George Mentzer** of the County of Woodson, and State of Kansas, party of the second part; and **William O. Jansen**, as Trustee of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, party of the third part.

Witnesseth, that:

Whereas, the parties of the first part have sold the premises in Woodson County, Kansas, hereinafter described to the party of the second part; and

Whereas, the said premises are subject to the lien of a Trust Deed dated September 30, 1898, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds of said Woodson County, Kansas, in Volume 5, at page 579, on April 19, 1899; and

Whereas, a release from the said Trust Deed is necessary in order to give a perfect title to the party of the second part of the property hereinafter described and conveyed.

Now Therefore, This Indenture Witnesseth, That the parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of One Dollar ($1.00) and other valuable considerations to them duly paid by the party of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have conveyed and warranted, and by these presents do convey and warrant to said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever, the following lands situated in the County of Woodson, State of Kansas, to wit:

The fractional North half (N½) of Section Nineteen (19), Township Twenty Four (24), Range Fifteen (15) East of the Sixth Principal Meridian, containing Three Hundred and Four and Twenty Eight one hundredths (304.28) acres more or less, according to United States Survey.

To have and to hold the said premises with the appurtenances unto the party of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever.

And in consideration of the premises William O. Jansen, as Trustee, party of the third part, hereby releases from the lien and operation of said trust deed to the said George Mentzer, party of the second part, his heirs and assigns, the said premises and property hereinbefore described and conveyed.

Page 143

In Witness Whereof, the parties of the first and third parts have executed this indenture the day and year first above written.

John E. Frost
Margaret E. Frost
by Mary E. Frost, her attorney in fact

William O. Jansen, (Seal)
as Trustee

(#360 Rev Con)

State of Kansas, Shawnee County, ss.

Be It Remembered, that on this 5th day of October, 1899, before me, a Notary Public duly commissioned in and for the County and State aforesaid, came John E. Frost and Margaret E. Frost, his wife, by Mary E. Frost, her attorney in fact, who are personally known to me to be the same persons who executed the foregoing instrument of writing as grantors, and they duly acknowledged the execution of the same.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal the day and year last above written.

(Seal)

Leo H. Porter, Notary Public

My Commission expires January 21, 1901.

State of Illinois, County of Cook, ss.

Be It Remembered, that on this Seventh day of October, 1899, before me, a Notary Public duly commissioned in and for the County and State aforesaid, came William O. Jansen, who is personally known to me as the same person who executed the foregoing instrument of writing as Trustee, and who is known to me to be such Trustee, and he duly acknowledged the execution of the same.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal the day and year last above written.

(Seal)

A. E. Speirs, Notary Public

My Commission Expires June 13, 1903.

Filed for record Oct. 18th, 1899 at 11:30 A.M.

Geo. L. Martin
Register of Deeds

Julia Harding Hutchinson – From Biography to Ballad

By Marcia Crawford Philbrick
June 30, 2026
ABC Biography,Artificial Intelligence,Harding,Hutchinson
https://heartlandgenealogy.org/2026/06/30/jballad/

One of the goals of my genealogy research is to move beyond names, dates, and places and find ways to tell the stories of my ancestors. While documents help establish the facts of a person's life, they don't always capture the emotions, sacrifices, and experiences that shaped that life.

Recently, I created a biography of my 2nd great-grandmother, **Julia Harding Hutchinson (1840–1892)**. Julia was born in New Brunswick, Canada, married Albert Hutchinson in Iowa, raised a large family, endured the years when her husband served in the Civil War, and eventually moved with her family to Kansas.

After writing her biography, I wondered what her story might sound like if it were told through music.

Creating the Lyrics

Using information gathered from census records, family documents, and a RootsMagic narrative report, I asked ChatGPT to write lyrics that reflected Julia's life journey.

The resulting lyrics focused on several themes:

- Her childhood in New Brunswick, Canada
- Her marriage to Albert Hutchinson in Iowa
- The challenges of raising children while Albert served in the Civil War
- Life on the Iowa frontier
- The westward move to Kansas
- The legacy she left through her descendants

Rather than emphasizing specific dates and events, the lyrics sought to capture the broader story of a woman whose life spanned a period of tremendous change in North America.

Creating the Music

Once the lyrics were complete, I used Suno.com to generate the music.

The style prompt used was:

Heartfelt ballad, gentle piano, fiddle, acoustic guitar, warm family-history storytelling style, emotional chorus, Americana folk-country, reflective and uplifting similar to music of the 1860s to 1880s.

The resulting song has the feel of a traditional American folk ballad. The gentle instrumentation and reflective tone seemed appropriate for Julia's story and the era in which she lived.

From Song to Video

To make the song easier to share, I created a video in Canva using historical images and visuals that reflect the places and experiences associated with Julia's life.

The video combines the music with imagery inspired by:

- New Brunswick, Canada
- Iowa frontier life
- Civil War-era America
- Prairie landscapes
- Family photographs and genealogical records

After creating the video, I uploaded it to YouTube so it could be easily shared with family members and other researchers.

Watch the Video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=MyRXsinoIWg

Why Create Songs About Ancestors?

Traditional genealogy focuses on collecting evidence and documenting relationships. Those tasks remain essential. However, tools such as ChatGPT, Suno, Canva, and YouTube offer new ways to share family history.

A song cannot replace historical research, but it can help bring an ancestor's story to life in a way that engages family members who may never read a narrative report or study a pedigree chart.

For me, creating these songs has become another way of exploring family history—taking the facts discovered through research and transforming them into something that can be heard, shared, and remembered.

While we can never know exactly what Julia Harding Hutchinson sounded like or what music she enjoyed, I hope this ballad captures something of her journey from New Brunswick to Iowa and finally to Kansas, and honors the life she lived for her family.